The Moral of Luck

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ABSTRACT

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The concept of luck is important to a wide range of philosophical areas including ethics (moral luck), epistemology (epistemic luck), political philosophy (issues of distributive justice and just deserts), and metaphysics (causation and the notion of coincidence). However, until recently, many of these discussions appealed to the concept of luck (and intuitions surrounding the role of luck) only as an undefined primitive. This dissertation is directed at providing a theory of luck from a different vantage than contemporary philosophical accounts (such as those developed by Duncan Pritchard, Wayne Riggs, and Nicholas Rescher).

My first two chapters explore the existing treatments of luck in contemporary philosophy and a selection of psychological research is order to distinguish the philosophically relevant notion of luck from the popular superstitious ideas of luck. I propose that luck can be roughly described as involving a sense of significance (instances of luck matter to the affected parties) and a sense of unreliability (we cannot count on luck). I also identify two important trends in contemporary treatments of luck; 1) contemporary accounts have a much more detailed focus on the unreliability criterion than on the significance criterion, and 2) many discussions of luck treat luck as an intrinsic feature of the world such that instances of luck can be identified as matters of luck apart from any consideration of their significance.

In my third chapter, I argue that significance deserves as careful and detailed a treatment as unreliability, and I argue against the idea that the relevant notion of significance can be understood merely in terms of an affected subject's actual or potential beliefs about what is

significant to her. In giving a more nuanced account of significance, I propose a distinction between impersonal luck (luck that involves an advantage for any subject in the same situation) and personal luck (luck that involves an advantage for the subject only because of that subject's particular characteristics).

In my fourth chapter, I criticize accounts that treat luck as an intrinsic property that can be identified apart from a consideration of the significance for an affected subject (what I have called matter of luck accounts). I propose that luck is a property dependent on a practice of adopting modified attitudes (what I call luck attitudes) and that we can understand the unreliability of luck in terms of this practice; an advantage is ordinarily acquired if it is appropriate to adopt normal attitudes towards someone's possession of it, and an advantage is extraordinarily acquired, and therefore lucky, if it is appropriate to adopt the modified luck attitudes towards it.

My final chapter contains my theory of luck. Following the discussions in my third and fourth chapters, I propose an account where significance plays a central role in distinguishing instances of luck. I propose a framework on which advantages are ordinarily or extraordinarily obtained according to their significance to the possessor, and I propose that a lucky state of affairs be understood as a state of affairs that involves an advantage for a subject who has obtained that advantage in an extraordinary way. The conditions under which an advantage is ordinarily obtained are sensitive to the nature and degree of the advantage. In line with the discussion in my fourth chapter, I conclude by proposing some conditions which lead us to adopt normal attitudes (that is, conditions under which having an advantage would be considered ordinary) but leave it open to modification in light of changing social practices of, and standards for, adopting luck attitudes.

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To HD (LC) and the figments

Introduction

1. Mind the Gap: Everyday and Theoretical Understanding of Luck

In everyday life, it is natural to devote little thought to luck. Apart from some carefully sequestered domains (board and card games, athletic competitions, and casino gambling) saturated with the paraphernalia of luck (dice, cards, roulette wheels and the like) the presence of luck in ordinary life is largely hidden from view. Yet, its influence is considerable. The largest and most significant parts of life, where we are raised, who we love, where we work, who our friends are, and the natural talents we have, are, on reflection, all largely matters of luck. When we do take the time to reflect on the luck in our lives, it may present itself in various ways. On one hand, the superstitious tendency is to view luck as a force to be cajoled, appeased, or bargained with. The rabbit's foot is brought along to curry the favor of Lady Luck. On the other hand, luck colors the attitudes we take as our lives progress well or poorly. The triumphant athlete deflects praise by emphasizing luck's role in her victory; the unfortunate lottery player bemoans the unfairness of it all watching the winner interviewed on television.

So, why do we devote so little thought to luck? Perhaps the psychological burden is too high. Daniel Statman has suggested that:

> This widespread and profound effect of luck on human life hangs over us like a threat, generating the feeling that we have no real control over our lives. It undermines our sense of security and stability, promoting a sense of uncertainty with regard to our projects, relationships and aims. It makes our lives seem weak and fragile, always at the mercy of luck.[1]

The fear is that, if luck is given its due, then our accomplishments diminish to mere coincidence and our futures present themselves as a terrifying, unavoidable minefield of randomness. A

[1] Statman, Daniel. *Moral Luck.* State University of New York Press, 1993, p. 1.

bleak picture, to be sure, but it is not the only explanation. Perhaps luck is simply a difficult notion, poorly understood. The natural hesitation may simply be a hesitation to frame things in terms of a concept where our intuitions are confused. In this hopeful light, perhaps a nuanced understanding of luck can lead to a more generous spirit in our relationships with others and a healthier evaluation of ourselves.

While it is clear that the concept 'luck' is relevant to a variety of fields in philosophy (appearing in discussions on epistemology, ethics, distributive justice), the scope and force of this relevance is far from clear. Pre-reflective intuitions regarding the role of luck often present it as something pernicious to be ruled out. We want to distinguish actual knowledge from a lucky guess, we think moral status is immune to luck, and we have different ideas about suffering due to free choice and suffering from brute luck. However, it was only relatively recently that philosophers moved beyond treating luck as a primitive notion and even more recently that we have seen developed treatments of luck that offer more than rough conceptual equivalences. Inspired by and in response to seminal work by Bertrand Russel, Bernard Williams, Thomas Nagel, and Edmund Gettier, leading general accounts of luck have been offered by Nicholas Rescher, Duncan Pritchard, and Wayne Riggs.

The philosophical discussion of luck has largely focused on two issues. In epistemological discussions, there is a widely held intuition that knowledge is incompatible with luck; luck cannot play an essential or constitutive role in the acquisition of knowledge. When someone is, in a certain sense, lucky that her belief is true, this true belief cannot count as knowledge. This intuition has led some to develop specifically anti-luck epistemologies. The anti-luck epistemologist presumes that a careful investigation of the kind of luck that undermines

knowledge will reveal an important condition on knowledge that can improve on or replace the classic tripartite account of knowledge (as justified true belief).

In the study of ethics, there is a tension between the intuition (sometimes attributed to a Kantian understanding of morality) that moral standing is immune to the influence of luck and the standard practice of moral evaluation in light of things that are subject to luck. Prima facie, there are morally relevant features of people, actions, and consequences that are due to luck, but there is something uncomfortable about letting luck make any moral difference at all. For instance, if we consider two similar drunk drivers one of whom arrives home safely and one of whom hits and kills a pedestrian, then our condemnation of the lethal driver will be far greater than that of the fortunate one. And yet, it is hard to argue against the idea that the only difference between the two is due to luck. There is something uncomfortable about letting luck play such a moral role, but the alternative seems to be to radically revise our practice of moral assessment.

There seems to be a gap between the intuitive, pre-reflective understanding and use of the luck concept in everyday life and the treatment of the luck concept in contemporary philosophy. Outside the academic discussion, luck presents itself mostly in our reactions to and evaluations of significant and unusual features of our lives (and, on occasion, in our anticipation of significant and unusual developments). Luck is most often acknowledged when things are (or would be) most significant to us. Inside the academic discussion, philosophers have paid relatively little attention to this kind of significance. Many theories have approached the concept by first trying to distinguish a class of matters of luck that can be identified as potentially lucky apart from any reference to their significance for anyone. Then, a significance criterion is added which, if satisfied, promotes the matter of luck to a genuine case of luck. Some have gone so far

as to suggest that such an addition is ad hoc and unnecessary for understanding the relevant notion of luck.

The aim of my project, then, is to close this gap with a theory that plays careful attention to the role of significance involved in cases of luck and that accounts for the distinctive reactions and evaluations that make up much of our everyday experience with luck. I do not intend to take the strong position that such an account is necessarily needed to understand the related concerns in philosophy except to offer the following: if it turns out that a fully descriptive account of our intuitive, pre-reflective understanding of luck is at odds with the theoretically relevant notion of luck, such a discovery might help us diagnose the conflict of intuitions involved in epistemic luck and the paradox of moral luck.[2]

2. Outline and General Structure

The structure of this project is motivated directly by my concern with what I have described as our everyday experience with luck. I begin by considering the pre-reflective attitudes and intuitions ever-present in philosophical discussions of luck and a small sample of psychological research on luck. The numerous conflicts and tensions will make it difficult to say anything uncontroversial, so I will stipulate some important language to move the discussion forward. I treat good luck and bad luck as the basic luck concepts, treating the neutral luck term as shorthand for the disjunction 'good luck or bad luck.' I also describe a class of luck attitudes; modified attitudes that we adopt or endorse in light of having characterized something (or someone) as lucky or unlucky. A precise description of the particular modifications that do occur or that should occur in light of characterizing a case as lucky or unlucky is beyond the

[2] In brief, this might help us understand why, despite the platitude 'knowledge excludes luck,' knowledge seems compatible with some kinds of luck and not with others (and one task of the anti-luck epistemologist is to specify this difference), and this might help resolve the tension between the idea that one's moral character is immune to luck and the fact that almost all of the moral assessments that we make are based on things that are subject to luck.

scope of this project. It is enough for me to identify them as attitudes that are different from the attitudes that we adopt if the case were not treated as lucky.

Following this stage setting, I offer a summary of the existing philosophical literature on luck and more detailed descriptions of three leading accounts of luck offered by Duncan Pritchard, Wayne Riggs, and Nicholas Rescher. I identify two important trends in these contemporary treatments of luck; 1) contemporary accounts pay relatively little attention to the nuances of how cases of luck are significant for the agents involved, and 2) discussions of luck often treat luck as an intrinsic feature of the world such that instances of luck can be identified as matters of luck apart from any consideration of their significance for particular agents. While these trends are not necessarily problematic for the intended application of these theories (primarily in epistemology), they are the source of the gap between everyday and theoretical treatments of luck.

So, I next turn my attention to an account of the so far neglected idea that any case of luck is significant for some subject. I propose that there are a number of prima facie difficulties that arise from leaving the relevant notion of significance undefined, and propose an account of significance in terms of the advantage involved for a particular subject. In order to refrain from limiting my theory to any particular ethical or meta-ethical position, I describe advantages as anything that can be properly said to be *good for* a subject, however understood. This general approach still allows me to make a distinction between impersonal advantages (things that are good for a subject that would be equally good for another subject in the same situation) and personal advantages (things that are good for a subject only in light of something particular to that subject) which allows me to offer a less conflicted analysis of the prima facie difficulties that arose from leaving significance undefined.

Following this discussion, I address the common approach to theorizing about luck that I call the matter of luck approach. Roughly, the matter of luck approach involves trying to distinguish a class of potentially lucky cases (matters of luck) apart from a consideration of an affected subject. Matters of luck are then promoted to genuine cases of luck if they happen to satisfy an additional significance criterion, often described in terms of an affected subject's beliefs (or potential beliefs). I suggest that this approach might stem from thinking of luck as an intrinsic property, but the observations about pre-reflective understanding and use of the luck concept in terms of luck attitudes suggests that we might do better treating luck as a property that is dependent on an existing set of practices and attitudes.

I conclude by offering my own theory of luck. Following these observations, I propose an account where significance plays a central role in distinguishing instances of luck. I propose a framework on which advantages are ordinarily or extraordinarily obtained according to their significance to the possessor, and I propose that a lucky state of affairs be understood as a state of affairs that involves an advantage for a subject who has obtained that advantage in an extraordinary way. The conditions under which an advantage is ordinarily obtained are sensitive to the nature and degree of the advantage. For illustrative purposes, I close by proposing some conditions which seem to lead us to adopt normal reactive attitudes (that is, conditions under which having an advantage would be considered ordinary), but I leave it open to modification in light of changing social practices and practical justification for adopting luck attitudes.

Chapter I: A Difficult Notion

1. Introduction

The difficulty involved in developing a satisfactory account of luck becomes obvious from the moment we recognize that there is no single clear and consistent, commonsense, or 'folk' understanding to rely on. Often the luck claims and attributions that we are most confident in lead to conflicting or even outright contradictory intuitions about the luck concept itself. As psychologist John Cohen writes:

> The idea of luck is ubiquitous but by no means simple, in the sense that it means precisely the same to everyone, everywhere. Expressions for 'luck' in different languages introduce nuances that are difficult, if not impossible, to capture in any particular tongue. And even those who speak the same language do not necessarily use the word for 'luck' in the same sense.[3]

Philosophers writing about luck often treat it as a primitive notion or depend on a loose conceptual relation to chance, accidents, predictability, or control. Similarly, in the psychological literature, we can see a clear absence of consensus; attribution, comparison process, and belief-based research all study participant beliefs about luck differently, both relying on and revealing different intuitive notions about the concept of luck itself.

In this chapter, I would like to introduce my approach to developing a theory of luck by first describing these intuitions and showing the tensions they create. As Pritchard and Smith write, "Our everyday intuitions about luck may license contradictory elucidations of this

[3] Cohen, John. *Chance, Skill and Luck: The Psychology of Guessing and Gambling.* London: Pelican, 1960, p. 114. Similar, but less general observations are made by Meyer, John P. "Causal Attributions for Success and Failure." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38 (1980):704-715. This research found that participants do not clearly identify luck in a consistent way.

notion."[4] So, I begin by laying out what I see as the core ideas involved in luck, the intuitive ideas suggested by findings in and approaches to psychological research, and the intuitive ideas seemingly behind the partial accounts historically used in philosophical writing. Following this somewhat quick and loose discussion, I will present the motivations for the basic assumptions that my developed theory is based on, and I address some concerns raised by this way of thinking about luck.

2. Core Notions

As I see it, there are two core ideas involved in luck. These core ideas are intentionally broad; they are only meant to situate the discussion in terms of what minimum features we need to include if we can be said to be talking about the concept 'luck' at all. First, luck involves the idea that a person is somehow better or worse off (for good luck and bad luck, respectively). There is no luck, either good or bad, if no person is positively or negatively affected. I'll call this the *significance criterion*. Second, luck involves the idea that something is unusual, abnormal, or unexpected. Luck may be pervasive and ubiquitous in the sense that we get lucky or unlucky more often than not or in the sense that more of our lives are influenced by luck than not, but every individual case of luck must be abnormal in some way. Luck is unreliable; it is an interruption in the way we can reasonably expect things to go. We cannot, or at least should not, count on getting lucky.[5] There is no luck when things 'go according to plan.' I'll call this the *unreliability criterion*. Importantly, this does not necessarily need to be interpreted in terms of probability, predictability, or chance. The ordinary[6] course of events is not necessarily the most

[4] Pritchard, Duncan and Michael Smith. "The Psychology and Philosophy of Luck." *New Ideas in Psychology,* 22 (2004), p.14.

[5] There may be a complication here; for example, in some game situations, the best play may be to play as if we will get lucky in a particular way. However, the general point is that we cannot reasonably expect to be lucky.

[6] Ordinariness will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter V, pp. 146-156.

likely course of events. So, it is my claim that any account that does not somehow accommodate the significance and unreliability criteria is not properly an account of *luck*.

Along with these core ideas involved in luck, I also want to present a handful of intuitively uncontroversial luck cases. If a proposed account of luck conflicts with one or more of these examples, I take this as a reason for seeing the account as problematic or inadequate:

1. Lucky guess: Suppose someone is taking a multiple choice test and does not understand one of the questions. They choose to fill in a circle anyway. If this ends up being the correct answer, this counts as a lucky guess and the guesser is lucky. Similar examples could be constructed where a person somehow gets credit for providing a correct answer when he or she does not have sufficient reasons for giving that answer.
2. Lottery Win: If a player in a fair lottery wins, that player is lucky to have won that lottery.
3. Found Treasure: If someone goes for a hike through the woods and discovers a box of treasure, then that person is lucky to have found that treasure.

Obviously, these examples can all be made controversial with small alterations. However, I am presenting them here in their simplest form to show the types of cases that are central to the idea of luck.

3. Basic Intuitions: Psychology

It is not my intention, in this section, to give a complete or even detailed survey of the psychological research on luck. Instead, I only mean to introduce some brief findings in this field as a way of introducing some common intuitions about luck. Psychological research on luck has approached the concept in at least three distinct ways. Here, I want to look at some of the findings of this kind of psychological research to educe the intuitions that are suggested by

these findings and the intuitions that influenced how the research is framed. First, there is attribution research[7] which focuses on how people construct causal explanations. These studies focus on explanations of why a person acted as they did and on why a person succeeded or failed in what they attempted to do. Within the psychological research on achievement (why a person succeeded or failed in their attempts), psychologists have looked at when people attribute success or failure to luck and how people feel about such attributions.

One way this kind of research has been framed separates the way people explain actions and events between those which propose stable causes from those which propose variable causes.[8] Additionally, there is a division between when people attribute an action or event to an internal (to the actor or actors) cause and when they attribute it to an external cause. Heider proposed that "When success is attributed to luck... environmental conditions, rather than the person, are primarily responsible for the outcome, and second, that these environmental conditions are the product of chance."[9] So, Heider suggests that luck attributions come up most often when the attributer sees an outcome as having a variable (since it is due to chance), external (that is, environmental) cause. Weiner elaborates on Heider's work and suggests that luck attributions involve seeing an external, unstable, and uncontrollable cause.[10]

What does this tell us about the intuitions at play, here? Immediately, we can see an intuitive connection with the unreliability criterion, here described in terms of variability or instability. Intuitive relationships with chance and control also emerge. The way the research is

[7] For an overview of this research, see Fiske, Susan and Shelley E. Taylor. *Social Cognition.* New York: McGraw Hill, 1991.

[8] See, for example, Heider, Fritz. *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations.* New York: Wiley, 1958.

[9] Heider, p. 91.

[10] Weiner, Bernard. *An Attributional Theory of Achievement, Motivation, and Emotion.* New York: Springer, 1986.

set up treats luck as a property of events, depending on the causes of those events. I'll call this the events-based conception of luck:

I_1. Luckiness is a property of events.

Additionally, we can see the unreliability criterion expressed in a number of smaller intuitions:

I_2. Lucky events have unstable causes.

I_3. Lucky events have external (rather than internal) causes.

I_4. Lucky events are uncontrollable.

I_5. Lucky events are the result of chance.

While the relevant interpretation of chance is not obvious, here, further attribution research has been directed at the relationship between luck and chance. For example, Wagenaar and Keren[11] had one group of participants write descriptions of events that were lucky while another group wrote descriptions of events that happened by chance. A third group was instructed to rate the applicability of twelve different dimensions to these stories. The researchers found that luck and chance stories differed along several dimensions, such as surprise and coincidence (which were more closely tied to chance stories) and level of accomplishment and important consequences (which were more closely tied to luck stories). Probability was not indicative of luck or chance.

I_6. Luck and chance are distinct. The relevant notion of chance is distinct from probability.

In an earlier study, Keren and Wagenaar[12] found that, in gambling situations, participants identified luck and chance as different causes of events. Participants agreed that some players

[11] Wagenaar, Willem A. and Gideon B. Keren. "Chance and Luck are Not the Same." *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making,* 1.2 (1988): 65-75.

[12] Keren, Gideon B. and Willem A. Wagenaar. "On the Psychology of Playing Blackjack: Normative and Descriptice Considerations with Implications for Decision Theory." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General,* 114 (1985): 133-158.

may be luckier than others, while chance remains the same for everyone. So, in contrast to the events-based conception of luck (I_1), we get:

I_7. Luckiness is a property of persons.

I'll call this the persons-based conception of luck. Also in contrast to the findings of Heider and Weiner, Keren and Wagenaar[13] found that, in gambling situations, participants identified luck in situations where an expected variability was not observed: "Lack of sufficient variability (in wins and losses) within short runs is apparently expressed in terms of luck."[14]

I_8. When variability is expected, stability can be attributed to luck.

A second area of psychological research that has been concerned with luck is focused on the role of comparison processes. This research focuses on the role of counterfactual thinking. This kind of research is partially motivated by the observation that often, in clearly negative situations such as car or plane crashes, survivors will perceive themselves as lucky to only suffer small pains (being injured rather than killed, for example) because they can easily imagine a worse outcome. In one study[15] participants were given a description of a day that ended in a major positive outcome, a major negative outcome, a major positive outcome that almost happened but did not, a major negative outcome that almost happened but did not, or no major outcome, positive or negative. When participants were asked to rate these scenarios on how happy, satisfied, and lucky they would feel, those who nearly experienced a major negative event reported feeling luckier than those who experienced no major outcome, and those who nearly experienced a major positive event reported feeling less lucky than those who experienced no

[13] ibid.

[14] ibid, p. 152.

[15] Johnson, Joel T.. "The Knowledge of What Might Have Been: Affective and Attributional Consequences of Near Outcomes." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin,* 12 (1986): 51-62.

major outcome. However, measures of happiness and satisfaction were not significantly different between these groups.

This research seems to suggest that counterfactual thinking plays an important role in luck attributions, and it leads to an attractive way of making sense of the unreliability criterion since counterfactuals might be imagined as a way of identifying a normal case:

I_9. Counterfactual thinking significantly impacts our perception of luck.

Additionally, by asking participants to rate how lucky they feel, this study treats luck as a personally subjective feeling.

I_{10}. Luck is a personally subjective feeling.

We can also weaken this intuition to get:

I_{11}. There are distinct personally subjective feelings associated with being lucky or unlucky.

Or, we can strengthen it. If luck is *only* a subjective feeling, we might get:

I_{12}. Luck claims are not truth-apt.

Counterfactual thinking also seems to play a significant role when people attribute more permanent aspects of their lives to good luck. Imagine claims such as, "I am lucky to have such a wonderful family" or "I am lucky to enjoy my career." Tiegen[16] has suggested that this kind of luck claim implies an awareness of and comparison to an alternative state of affairs.

I_{13}. Luck is a property of states of affairs.

Finally, we can also see the common notion of luck as a comparative emerge:

I_{14}. Luckiness admits of degrees; one person or event can be less lucky than another, but nonetheless still actually lucky.

[16] Teigen, Karl H. "Luck: the Art of a Near Miss." *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 37 (1996): 156-171.

There is some question about the comparative aspect of luck. For example, winning a raffle with several hundred participants seems obviously luckier than winning a raffle with only a few dozen. Those who believe in a very tight connection between luck and probability might propose that luck is comparable because of its connection to comparable probabilities.

$I_{15.}$ A lucky event can be more or less lucky than another lucky event by being more or less probable than the other event.

However, Tiegen[17] found that success was also perceived as luckier when it was physically close to a failure (and failure was perceived as involving greater bad luck if it was physically close to success) than when it was physically distant even if the probabilities were acknowledged as being the same. For example, if a roulette ball lands in a losing chamber neighboring a winning chamber, participants perceived this as involving greater bad luck than if the ball lands in a losing chamber on the opposite side of the wheel. This perception persisted even when participants acknowledged that the probability of the ball landing in any one of the losing chambers was the same.

$I_{16.}$ A lucky event can be more or less lucky than another lucky event based on factors other than relative probabilities.

This may be explained by Kahneman and Varey's[18] findings that counterfactual thinking is more common when the alternative outcome is perceived as being temporally or physically close.

The third and final area of psychological research on luck I would like to consider is focused on directly questioning individual participant beliefs about luck. Darke and Freedman found reliable individual differences in beliefs about luck: "Some individuals maintain an

[17] ibid.

[18] Kahneman, Daniel and Carol A. Varey. "Propensities and Counterfactuals: the Loser that Almost Won." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 59 (1990): 1101-1110.

irrational view of luck as a somewhat stable force that tends to influence events in their own favor, while others seem to hold the more rational belief that luck is random and unreliable."[19] Simply describing the distinction in this ways reveals a significant intuition held by the researchers:

$I_{17.}$ Beliefs about luck are subject to norms of rationality.

And, since our beliefs about luck strongly inform our tendency to make luck claims and attributions, we can extrapolate:

I_{18}. Luck claims and attributions are subject to norms of rationality.

Holders of the irrational view of luck tend to treat luck as a sort of invisible skill or agent that can be controlled or bargained with. For example, Hayano[20] found that poker players tended to treat luck as an agent that was responsible for the pattern of the cards.

I_{19}. An individual's luck can be controlled or manipulated.

This intuition relies on I_7 (luckiness is a property of persons) and lies beneath the popular conceptions of lucky charms, rituals, and the personification of Lady Luck. Some psychologists have suggested that this so-called irrational belief in luck stems from a confusion "when factors from skill situations (such as competition, choice, familiarity, and involvement) are introduced into chance situations."[21] It is also interesting to observe how this contrasts with earlier external descriptions of luck as involving primarily external causes found in attribution research. In fact, I think there is a strong, more specific intuition regarding the relationship between luck and skill:

I_{20}. Luck and skill form a dichotomy.

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[19] Darke, Peter R. and Jonathan L. Freedman. "The Belief in Good Luck Scale." *Journal of Research in Personality*, 31 (1997), p. 486.

[20] Hayano, David M. “Strategies for the Management of Luck and Action in an Urban Poker Parlour.” *Urban Life*, 6 (1978):475-488.

[21] Pritchard and Smith, p. 13.

In many competitive situations, success is explained as a zero-sum combination of luck and skill; the more responsible a player's skill is for their success, the less it is due to luck, and vice versa. For example, when an Olympic runner beats an amateur in a footrace, the success is attributed entirely or nearly entirely to skill. If the amateur won, the success would be attributed almost entirely to luck. We would claim that the amateur was lucky as a way of emphasizing that the amateur runner's skill as not responsible for his win.

4. Basic Intuitions: Philosophy

In addition to the intuitive notions of luck found in psychological literature, there are also some common intuitions to be found in philosophical writing on luck. A careful analysis of philosophical accounts of luck will be presented in the next chapter, including discussion of the three developed accounts of luck, presented by Duncan Pritchard, Wayne Riggs, and Nicholas Rescher. Here, I only aim to describe some general trends in philosophical writing on luck to add to the list of basic intuitions developed in the previous section.

Historically, philosophical writing about luck can be found predominately in discussion on two topics, moral luck and epistemic luck, and there are similar anti-luck intuitions appealed to in each case. In the case of moral luck, the basic anti-luck intuition, often attributed to Kant, can be described in the following way:

I_{21}. We should not be morally assessed positively for being lucky or negatively for being unlucky.

In other words, the intuition is that what matters to us, morally, is not susceptible to luck; if the only difference between two cases is due to luck, then there is no morally relevant difference between the two cases. The discussion then focuses on those cases where something seemingly

morally relevant is intuitively due to luck, and considerable work has been dedicated to explaining this apparent conflict.

Writing about epistemic luck has relied on a similar intuition about the incompatibility of luck and knowledge:

I_{22}. True beliefs (even justified true beliefs) do not count as knowledge if their truth is a matter of luck.

Peter Unger describes one version of this intuition when he writes that knowledge requires that it is "not at all an accident that the man is right about it being the case that p."[22] Discussions then center on the best way to cash out this intuition. The attractiveness of this intuition is described by Pritchard: "Knowledge does appear to be a cognitive achievement of some sort, and luck seems to militate against genuine achievements."[23] This kind of claim echoes I_{20} (luck and skill form a dichotomy) from the previous section.

In all these areas, however, developed accounts of luck itself are rare. For the most part, writers either treat luck as an undefined primitive, depend on having the reader extrapolate a concept of luck from some simple examples or, most often, rely on a rough conceptual equivalence. For example, Nagel[24] will develop his discussion in terms of things that are not in an agent's control (similar to I_4: lucky events are uncontrollable). However, with even a little reflection, this can be, at most, a necessary condition for luckiness. Many things are out of my control but of no significance to me (such as my neighbor finding a penny on the sidewalk), and many things are outside of my control but regular and predictable in such a way as to be outside the domain of luck (such as the sun rising in the morning).

[22] Unger, Peter. "An Analysis of Factual Knowledge." *The Journal of Philosophy*, 65.6 (1968), p. 158.

[23] Pritchard, Duncan. *Epistemic Luck*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005, p.1.

[24] Nagel, Thomas. "Moral Luck." *Moral Luck.* Ed. Daniel Statman. State University of New York Press, 1993. 57-72.

There are other, more restrictive, conceptual equivalences found in philosophical writing. Morillo[25] and Unger[26] have both tied the concepts of luck and accident very closely. Again, it takes very little reflection to see why this characterization is incomplete. If someone enters a lottery and wins, it is very strange to say that this was an accident. After all, they entered the lottery deliberately, in order to win. Other writers like Harper[27] and Rescher[28] have drawn parallels between luck and chance (similar to I_5 :lucky events are the result of chance) and Anders Schinkel has described the unreliability of luck in terms of what "we had no reason to expect."[29] When we resort to these vague conceptual equivalences, it is not clear that the motivating intuitions about luck still apply. This is the area where I think that a careful general account of luck can be most philosophically fruitful.

For convenience, I reproduce this list of basic intuitions from the previous two sections here:

I_1. Luckiness is a property of events.
I_2. Lucky events have unstable causes.
I_3. Lucky events have external (rather than internal) causes.
I_4. Lucky events are uncontrollable.
I_5. Lucky events are the result of chance.
I_6. Luck and chance are distinct. The relevant notion of chance is distinct from probability.
I_7. Luckiness is a property of persons.
I_8. When variability is expected, stability can be attributed to luck.
I_9. Counterfactual thinking significantly impacts our perception of luck.
I_{10}. Luck is a personally subjective feeling.

[25] Morillo, Carolyn. "Epistemic Luck, Naturalistic Epistemology, and the Ecology of Knowledge." *Philosophical Studies*, 46 (1984):109-129.

[26] Unger, Peter. "An Analysis of Factual Knowledge." *The Journal of Philosophy*, 65.6 (1968): 157-170.

[27] Harper, William. "Knowledge and Luck." *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 34 (1996):273-283.

[28] Rescher, Nicholas. "Moral Luck." *Moral Luck.* Ed. Daniel Statman. State University of New York Press, 1993. 141-166.

[29] Schinkel, Anders. "The Problem of Moral Luck: An Argument Against its Epistemic Reduction." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*. 12 (2009), p. 269.

I_{11}. There are distinct personally subjective feelings associated with being lucky or unlucky.
I_{12}. Luck claims are not truth-apt.
I_{13}. Luck is a property of states of affairs.
I_{14}. Luckiness admits of degrees; one person or event can be less lucky than another, but nonetheless still actually lucky.
I_{15}. A lucky event can be more or less lucky than another lucky event by being more or less probable than the other event.
I_{16}. A lucky event can be more or less lucky than another lucky event based on factors other than relative probabilities.
I_{17}. Beliefs about luck are subject to norms of rationality.
I_{18}. Luck claims and attributions are subject to norms of rationality.
I_{19}. An individual's luck can be controlled or manipulated.
I_{20}. Luck and skill form a dichotomy.
I_{21}. We should not be morally assessed positively for being lucky or negatively for being unlucky.
I_{22}. True beliefs (even justified true beliefs) do not count as knowledge if their truth is a matter of luck.

5. Starting Point: Luck Attitudes

Acknowledging the variety and inconsistency of the intuitions surrounding luck just described, where should we turn to develop a more unified account of luck? One important question that has been left unaddressed so far is, why do we care about luck in everyday life? Or, more precisely, why do we care about the distinction between lucky and non-lucky, in everyday life? One way to approach an answer is to consider what is at stake when everyday disagreements about luck happen. Very broadly, I think there are two distinct kinds of everyday disagreements about luck. First, we have disagreements about whether something is good or bad for a person. For example, if a friend is involved in a destructive romantic relationship, then we might disagree on whether or not he is lucky to be unexpectedly broken up with. Second, we have disagreements about the way a gain or loss is acquired. For example, when playing sports or games, there are often disagreements over whether or not a player's success is due to luck.

As Pritchard has noted, there seems to be some tension between luck and achievement, and, as captured by I_{20} (luck and skill form a dichotomy), luck and skill seem opposed to the

extent that luck might, in a sense, undermine skill. Now, achievement and skill are somewhat vague concepts, and I am not in a position to present any specific definitions for them here. However, if we ask what is at stake in everyday disagreements about luck and we try to find something in common in the stakes of the two kinds of everyday disagreements described above, I think these intuitions are illuminating. What seems to hinge on classifying a case as lucky or non-lucky is a matter of attitudes.

When playing sports and games, whether or not a win or loss is lucky does not affect the raw value of that win or loss (after all, 'a point is a point'), but it does affect how we do (and ought to) view and react to that win or loss. Lucky wins are less indicative of skill and are less of an achievement. Whether or not we think of some part of our lives as being due to luck impacts the attitudes we take toward that part of our lives, and whether or not we think of some parts of other people's lives as being due to luck impacts the attitudes we take toward those parts of their lives.

When our attitudes toward a person and his or her gain or loss are modified because of a recognition that the gain or loss was lucky or unlucky for that person, the modified attitudes are what I am calling *luck attitudes*. I do not know that it is possible or desirable to give a complete and exhaustive list of all the modifications that result in luck attitudes, but they will include, at least, limiting praise in the presence of good luck and limiting blame in the presence of bad luck, expecting greater humility and gratitude from lucky winners, offering consolation and support to unlucky sufferers, being envious or even resentful of a lucky opponent's victory, and seeing lucky wins and unlucky losses as less indicative of the winner's or loser's skills and talents.

Given that the basic intuitions about luck identified in the previous two sections cannot all be accommodated into a single starting point (as observed, some of these intuitions are, at

least prima facie, contradictory), I want to start, instead, with the following goal. I aim to develop an account of luck that is focused on our pre-reflective use and concern with the concept of luck rather than focusing on an account developed for a particular theoretical end. That is, rather than providing an account of luck as a tool for discussing particular philosophical concerns (such as those surrounding moral luck or epistemic luck), I aim to provide an account focused on the way the concept is used in everyday life and the practices surrounding its use.

By adopting a theory of this kind, I think that we are left on more solid ground to begin theorizing about more specific philosophical issues with a clearer picture of how and why we might want to appeal to certain intuitions about luck while setting aside others. To this end, my approach takes the luck attitudes as a starting point; I take for granted that there is a distinct set of modified attitudes, the luck attitudes, that are adopted when a person recognizes that something is lucky or unlucky. The principal practice surrounding the use of the concept luck is the practice of adopting luck attitudes toward people, events, and states of affairs. Very roughly, then, I will approach my theory of luck as an attempt to pick out just those cases where adopting these modified attitudes is appropriate.

6. Stage Setting: The Language of Luck

The rough sketch of my approach is, of course, quite rough; the language I have been using so far is incredibly loose. The purpose of this section, then, is to introduce some more precise language and to make the motivations for certain assumptions and commitments in my account clear in order to properly set the stage for the discussions in the following chapters. I'll begin by offering the following, I think plausible, but not entirely uncontroversial picture of the language of luck.

When we consider luck, as a concept, it cannot appear apart from the evaluative concepts 'good luck' and 'bad luck.' If we take the two core ideas of luck seriously, as identified in section 2, there are two ways we might perceive a hierarchy between the neutral term 'luck' and the evaluative terms 'good luck' and 'bad luck.' First, we might think that the unreliability criterion is the distinguishing feature of luck and that the addition of significance gets us to good luck and bad luck. We can think of luck as distinguished by a certain kind of unreliability, and all cases of that kind of reliability can be cases of either good luck or bad luck when saturated with positive or negative significance for someone. This will be discussed as the matter of luck approach and my detailed criticism will appear in Chapter IV.[30] Second, we can think of good luck and bad luck as the basic concepts and use the neutral term 'luck' as shorthand for the disjunction 'good luck or bad luck.' This is my preferred approach.

For now, I will simply say that the matter of luck approach seems to miss an important concern we might have in giving an account of luck. Some cases that might appear as matters of luck seem less open to saturation with one kind of significance than the other. Consider the case of a reckless driver; when he chooses to drive home recklessly, there is unreliability in how this will turn out for him. The positive outcome might be that he arrives home safely and enjoys doing so. The negative outcome might be that he hits and kills a pedestrian and suffers the sanctions and penalties that go along with doing so. However, it seems, intuitively, that the reckless driver has good luck is he arrives home safely but does not have bad luck if he hits a pedestrian. In a sense, although the driver should not count on hitting a pedestrian every time he drives recklessly, he is not unlucky to do so; he is merelysuffering the consequences of his recklessness. Examples like these encourage me to think about luck in terms of when something good or something bad is unreliably obtained, rather than in terms of when unreliable situations

[30] See pp. 128-134.

lead to positive or negative consequences. I will reserve a more extended discussion of this topic for later.

Another reason to prefer seeing good luck and bad luck as basic concepts will emerge from a terminological distinction I want to make. As far as we are concerned with the everyday practice of adopting modified attitudes in light of good luck and bad luck, the everyday language that we should be most concerned with are expressions that attribute luckiness to particular people in light of some particular part of the world. This happens in a variety of ways, in everyday language; luck appears as a simple predicate of several things like agents (e.g. 'John is so lucky'), actions (e.g. 'That was a lucky shot'), events (e.g. 'Winning that lottery was lucky'), and states of affairs (e.g. 'That he won the lottery is lucky'). Luck also appears as a relation between (or as a property of the relation between) subjects and other entities. For example, in the claims 'Winning the lottery was lucky for John,' 'John is lucky that he won the lottery,' and 'John is lucky to be so tall,' luck appears to relate a subject (John) and an event, a state of affairs, and a personal trait, respectively. I'll call these expressions 'luck claims.'

I want to distinguish this kind of expression (luck claims), which attribute luckiness to something or things, from expressions about luck that do not attribute luckiness to any particular. I'll call these 'meta-luck claims,' and they are expressions such as, 'luck is a complicated concept,' 'lotteries involve a lot of luck,' and 'whether or not I win is just a matter of luck.' So, we can notice that luck claims, being expressions of our *prima facie* recognition of luck in the world, always attribute either good luck or bad luck. Someone or something is always specifically lucky or unlucky. In contrast, expressions about luck as a neutral concept will be meta-luck claims; these claims are not about recognizing luck in the world but rather reflective thoughts about luck or anticipations of luck to come. This provides another reason for me to see

good luck and bad luck as the basic concepts and to use the neutral term 'luck' as shorthand for their disjunction. Simple recognition of luckiness seems to be recognition of good luck and bad luck and not of some neutral form.

Since everyday luck claims attribute luckiness as a property, my next task is to articulate exactly how to think of luck, as a property. When we attribute luckiness to something, we usually do so with the terms 'lucky' and 'unlucky.' Their relations to the terms 'good luck' and 'bad luck' are easy enough. When a person is lucky, it means that they have good luck, and when a person is unlucky it means that they have bad luck. When we say that something other than a person is lucky, it means that it is something in light of which a salient person is lucky; when we say that something other than a person is unlucky, it means that it is something in light of which a salient person is unlucky.

Everyday luck claims also seem to rely on a large amount of implicit information. When I say 'that was a lucky shot' or 'he was lucky to win the lottery' there is a person who I am, implicitly, saying is lucky. Even when no interested subject appears in the expression, such as in 'that was a lucky shot,' a beneficiary is implied. Similarly, an expression like 'John is so lucky' leaves out what it is in light of which John is so lucky, but it is assumed to be clear in the context the utterance was made. So, I will assume that all luck claims express propositions and that these propositions (luck propositions) take the following canonical forms: 'S is lucky that P' and 'S is unlucky that P' where S is a subject and P is a proposition (that describes a state-of-affairs).[31]

Some might question why I have presented this in terms of subjects rather than agents. The explanation is simple and straightforward. As I take 'subject' to be the broader term, I use it

[31] Despite taking these to be canonical forms, I will often use natural language examples that leave some information implicit.

to leave open the possibility that persons who have lost some or all of their agency (perhaps due to a neurological impairment) can be lucky and unlucky. I also want to write in terms of subjects because I want to allow for the possibility that certain collective entities (such as companies or teams) can be lucky and unlucky, whatever we think about their status as agents or non-agents.

More importantly, we want to consider the way I've set up luck propositions to relate subjects and propositions, rather than subjects and events. After all, there is some temptation to think of luck primarily as it relates to events; some of the cleanest cases of luck such as winning the lottery, finding buried treasure, or making a lucky guess, are seemingly things that happen, i.e. events. I prefer to approach theorizing about luck in terms of propositions (and the states-of-affairs described by those propositions) for two reasons, one practical and one theoretical. First, the practical reason is that thinking in terms of propositions is more open and allows for more possible sources of luckiness than events; any event, E, that we are interested in can be captured by the state-of-affairs of that event having occurred.

The theoretical reason for my preference for thinking in terms of propositions is based on the observation that states-of-affairs are, in a sense, more fine-grained than events. For example, if I ran into Barack Obama on the bus and he were to give me a handkerchief, my being given a handkerchief from a friendly stranger and my being given a handkerchief from the president of the United States might be indistinguishable as events, but they are importantly different as states-of-affairs. I think want to distinguish the way that I am lucky that I received a handkerchief from the president of the United States and the way that I am lucky that I received a handkerchief from a friendly stranger. This distinction will play a significant role when I develop the idea of propositions *involving* advantages and disadvantages, in Chapter V.[32]

[32] See p. 140.

So, taking ‘S is lucky that P’ and ‘S is unlucky that P’ as the canonical forms of luck propositions, I want to stipulate some language for discussing luck as a property. First, I want to recognize that we might want to talk about ‘being lucky’ and ‘being unlucky’ as properties of subjects as well as properties of states-of-affairs. So, I will stipulate that, a subject S has the property of ‘being lucky’ if and only if there is a true proposition of the form ‘S is lucky that P’ for some relevant P. Similarly, a state-of-affairs described by P has the property of ‘being lucky’ if and only if there is a true proposition of the form ‘S is lucky that P’ for some relevant S. I will also sometimes use the language of a state-of-affairs being lucky *for* a subject; a state-of-affairs described by P is lucky for a subject if and only if that subject is lucky that P. The cases of bad luck can be generated by substituting ‘unlucky’ for ‘lucky,’ *ceteris paribus*. As is often done in natural language, throughout my discussion I will be using luckiness as a broad term to refer to the property of being lucky or unlucky. So, when I propose to evaluate the luckiness of a subject or state-of-affairs in a certain case, I am evaluating the truth of one or more luck propositions relevant to that case in which the subject or state-of-affairs appears.

To summarize, I take the following claims as my starting point for developing an account of luck:

1. Good luck and bad luck are the basic concepts I am interested in; the neutral term ‘luck’ can be understood as shorthand for the disjunction ‘good luck or bad luck.’
2. There is a distinction between luck claims, expressions of prima facie recognition of good luck or bad luck in the world, and meta-luck claims, expressions of reflective thoughts about luck including anticipations of good luck or bad luck to come.
3. For any subject S, ‘S is lucky’ means that S has good luck, and ‘S is unlucky’ means that S has bad luck. For any states-of-affairs described by proposition P, ‘P is lucky’ means

that some relevant subject is lucky relative to that state-of-affairs and 'P is unlucky' means that some relevant subject is unlucky relative to that state-of-affairs.

4. Luck claims express propositions; the propositions expressed by luck claims take the following canonical forms: 'S is lucky that P' and 'S is unlucky that P' where S is a subject and P is a proposition.
5. A state-of-affairs described by P is lucky *for* a subject if and only if that subject is lucky that P.

7. Luck Cognitivism, Luck Superstition, and Two Luck Skeptics

I want to conclude this chapter by addressing a few issues that arise from the way that I have framed my approach to developing a theory of luck. First, from my assertion that luck claims express propositions, there is an implicit commitment to a sort of luck cognitivism; luck claims can be true or false.[33] I think that this is a strong position to take and a defensible one. I argue that luck claims have truth conditions that are independent of any individual person's beliefs based on examples of the following kind.

Consider the confident lottery player. The confident lottery player buys a ticket fully expecting to win. This expectation might be explained in a number of ways. Perhaps the confident lottery player believes that he has some fool-proof method of picking winning numbers (that is not, in fact, effective). Or, perhaps, due to a recent string of misfortunes in his life, the confident lottery player believes that the universe somehow owes him a win. Or, perhaps, the confident lottery player might be confident because he has, in fact, rigged the lottery to ensure that his numbers will be selected. In the first two descriptions, the lottery player's confidence is based on some flawed belief; in the third, the lottery player's confidence is justified.

[33] More precisely, luck claims express propositions that are true or false.

Now, suppose that the confident lottery player does win. In no case will he believe that he is lucky for having won; after all, for him, winning the lottery is the expected or ordinary[34] outcome. The unreliability criterion does not seem, to him, to be met. Also, in every case, a typical observer will believe that the confident lottery player is lucky to win, as losing the lottery is the expected or normal case for any particular fair lottery player. If the confident lottery player loses, he may even believe that he is unlucky, while an observer will believe that he is not unlucky. However, whether or not the confident lottery player is actually lucky has nothing to do with these beliefs (his or the observer's) about his luckiness. What matters is whether or not the confident lottery player rigged the lottery and whether or not he wins the lottery. If he rigs the lottery he is not actually lucky to win, although he may be unlucky to lose (perhaps, some rare malfunction of the device he used to rig the lottery). If he does not rig the lottery, then he is actually lucky to win regardless of his own expectations and beliefs.

A non-cognitivist about luck would think of luck more as a personally subjective feeling; we saw hints of this in the setup of some psychological research on comparison processes. The luck non-cognitivist might think that feeling lucky (or thinking that oneself is lucky) is both necessary and sufficient for actually being lucky. They might explain examples like the confident lottery player by saying that it is merely more or less appropriate for the lottery player to feel lucky depending on the facts of the case, in the same way that certain circumstances make it more or less appropriate to feel angry or jealous.[35] On this view, luck claims are only true or false to the extent that they report the empirical fact of how a person actually feels.

[34] For the time being, I will rely on an intuitive notion of what constitutes ordinariness. My understanding of ordinariness will be developed in more detail in Chapter V, pp.146-156.

[35] It may be odd to feel angry when something good happens, but it makes no sense to say that I am mistaken in thinking that I am angry when something good happens and that I am not actually angry. In contrast, the luck cognitivist thinks that sometimes it does make sense to say that someone is mistaken in thinking that they are lucky.

If there is any appeal to this kind of position, it is that it seems well equipped to deal with the mess of conflicting intuitions presented in sections 3 and 4. However, I think the luck non-cognitivist runs into difficulty accounting for the way we usually treat second and third person luck attributions. When I claim that my opponent was lucky, this is clearly not a claim about how she actually feels. The luck non-cognitivist might interpret it as a claim expressing my personal feelings about the relationship between my opponent and her victory, but I think even this interpretation misses the point. When I claim that my opponent was lucky, I am pointing to certain features of the circumstances of my loss, independent of how I or my opponent feels about it, that excuses my losing or at least indicates that the loss should not be treated as indicative of future outcomes. It is difficult to imagine what the luck non-cognitivist could say about cases like these, without claiming that a large part of what we take ourselves to be doing in making these attributions is error-laden. Because of this, I am more confident in basing my account on cognitivist assumptions.

Although I do want to develop a view that avoids writing off large swaths of our pre-reflective beliefs and practices as error-laden, there is a popular practice surrounding luck that I would like to set aside. Superstitious luck claims might be the most familiar kind in popular media. These claims treat a person or an object as having some sort of 'luck power' to cause lucky outcomes. This idea shows up in lucky charms like rabbit's feet and horseshoes (we also get the negative in hexes and casino employed 'coolers'). As can be seen in some of the psychological literature on luck, we also employ a less obvious, but similarly superstitious treatment of luck when we treat luck as some kind of invisible skill (a stable feature of the person responsible for the outcomes that are lucky for them).

The problem with the superstitious version of luck is that it cannot be maintained along with the unreliability criterion. Suppose that I am gambling in a casino where the house has a slight edge. If I win, and am lucky to have won, then this implies that I have not done anything to ensure that I would win and that whatever I did to try to win (such as playing basic strategy in blackjack) was insufficient to ensure that I would win. If I had done something that would make it normal for me to win, then I would not be lucky to win. Now consider how something like a lucky charm is supposed to fit in. When someone claims that a rabbit's foot is lucky, they are claiming that having the rabbit's foot with me (or rubbing it on my scalp or some other ritual) will cause lucky things to happen to me. But if the rabbit's foot can actually cause me to win, then I am not lucky to have won! If the rabbit's foot actually improves my chances of winning, then it is not affecting how lucky I am, it merely affects events according to its causal power like any other cause. When I am lucky to win it is precisely because nothing I did was enough to cause me to win normally; if the rabbit's foot can, in fact, cause such a win, then the win ceases to be a lucky one. This argument against the idea of lucky charms applies to the invisible skill notion of luck as well. No skill I have can cause wins and losses if those wins and losses are actually lucky or unlucky. If my invisible luck skill or my lucky charm is actually efficacious, this may make me seem lucky to those unaware of this additional cause, but it will not affect when I am actually lucky. Strictly speaking, nothing can straightforwardly *cause* good or bad luck.[36]

Following up on the discussion of superstitious and non-superstitious concepts of luck from the previous section, there is a certain kind of skeptic that might argue that all luck talk is, to an extent, superstitious. She would note that, oftentimes, luck claims are typically presented

[36] We might, in a roundabout way, want to say that there are causes of good or bad luck in the sense that all parts of the causal chain that leads to a lucky event somehow 'cause' the good luck, but this is clearly different from what I am discussing here.

as a sort of causal explanation. For example, when I say that someone is lucky to be dealt a blackjack, to have won the lottery, or to have found a buried treasure this stops any further inquiry into why or how these events came about. "How did you find that treasure?" "I just got lucky." The skeptic sees these claims as playing some role in causal explanation—but this would make them contradictory in the same manner as the luckiness of a rabbit's foot. After all, if my luck explains the cause of my finding a hidden treasure, say, then my luck (as a skill, power, disposition, or some other quality) causes me to find the treasure. But if my finding the treasure is caused by my luck in this way then I am not really lucky to have found the treasure. I merely possessed the quality needed to find the treasure.

I think that this kind of skeptic is mistaken to think of luck attributions as playing the role of causal explanations. There is a complete causal explanation for each case that does not need to appeal to any concept of luck. However, these explanations are usually unsatisfactory in certain ways that lead us to ask for something beyond *causal* explanation. If I find buried treasure in the woods, there may be a complete causal explanation along the lines of 'I walked through the woods and stumbled across a box of buried treasure.' When someone presses the question of how I found the treasure, they are not asking for further *causal* explanation, they are looking for me to justify having found the treasure (such that they would adopt normal attitudes toward my possession of it). When I offer 'I just got lucky' in response to this inquiry, then, I am not proposing that luck is a cause or takes the place of a cause. Rather, I am conceding that modified attitudes are appropriate, relative to my finding the treasure. I claim that I am lucky because I am aware that the causal story does not provide reasons to adopt normal attitudes rather than luck attitudes.

However, the skeptic may very well reply that, having conceded that luck does not play a causal role (and in this sense is not metaphysically real), I am making a mistake in trying to develop a unified account of luck. This skeptic contends that, since luck is not metaphysically real, we should not think that there is (or ought to be) a unifying core to everyday luck claims. After all, the observations in sections 3 and 4 seemed to suggest precisely this; ways of talking about luck are so varied and inconsistent, that it doesn't really make sense to treat luck propositions as objectively true or false. To do so would be to artificially promote only one way of talking about luck. To this skeptic, leaving luck undefined or appealing to the concept in only a very loose way is precisely the right thing to do.

Unfortunately, I cannot offer a direct answer to this concern, other than to relocate the burden of proof. I intend to offer an account of luck that does not suppose metaphysical reality, in the sense identified by the skeptic. Seemingly then, the reason that a unified account of luck on such grounds would be undesirable, to such a skeptic, is that it would artificially privilege one way of talking about luck over another without any secure basis. However, I propose that my theory seeks to pick out what is common to these various ways of talking about luck (except for those ways that are excluded for independent reasons, such as the superstitious luck claims just discussed), and that, in light of the practice of adopting luck attitudes that exists as a matter of fact, such an account will still be informative. I suggest that the burden of proof should lie with the skeptic to show that my account is either, 1) unsuccessful in identifying something common to all ways of talking about luck that are not excluded for independent reasons, or 2) unhelpful for understanding the existing practice of adopting luck attitudes.

A second kind of skeptic might insist that all luck disappears from a fully-informed point of view; nothing satisfies the unreliability criterion if we have access to enough information.[37] Let me introduce this skeptical worry through the following, somewhat controversial, example: Suppose that a person has a secret benefactor who, unknown to the beneficiary, has been planning (for a long time) to send the beneficiary a large amount of money (today).[38] It is obvious that, from the point of view of the beneficiary, it appears lucky to suddenly be given a large amount of money, but there is some question about whether or not the beneficiary in this case is actually lucky. Some might contend that the beneficiary was merely fortunate because the benefactor had planned to send the money for a long time. Duncan Pritchard writes:

> it is far from clear that this is a case of luck… In order to see this, one need only note that if the agent were to discover that this event had been carefully planned all along, then he would plausibly no longer regard it as a lucky event. Indeed, once he discovered that this event was always due to occur, it seems plausible to suppose that he would regard himself as no more lucky than a favored son is lucky to have received a vast inheritance from his rich father.[39]

What I think Pritchard leaves out of this objection is that, even if the beneficiary came to see this monetary windfall as something that was always due to occur, he could (and I would argue, should) still consider himself lucky to have been selected by the secret benefactor in the first place. It is strange to claim that the beneficiary in this case is not actually lucky because there is information[40] that, if he had it, would lead him to see his current seemingly lucky situation as the necessary consequence of some earlier actually lucky event. It is not at all obvious that the beneficiary would not consider himself lucky to receive the money simply because the benefactor had planned to give it to him for a long time. In fact, it is similarly not clear that it

[37] We might think of the sentiment, commonly attributed to Einstein, that 'God does not play dice with the world.'

[38] The example of the secret benefactor comes from Rescher, Nicolas. "Moral Luck" in *Moral Luck*, p. 146.

[39] Pritchard and Smith, p. 21.

[40] That is, according to the example, not even available to him.

would be mistaken for an eldest son, who always knew he would inherit his father's fortune, to consider himself lucky to inherit it (in light of being lucky to *be* his father's son, being lucky to have been born his father's son, being lucky to live in a society that endorses primogeniture, or something of the like).[41]

Now, if we take Pritchard's position with respect to this particular example and generalize it, we get to get my second skeptical worry. Simply put, the concern is that, if we had complete knowledge of the causes of every event, then no events would seem lucky. The skeptic will push this and claim that, since nothing appears lucky from this fully informed point of view (since nothing seems to satisfy the unreliability criterion from the fully informed point of view), then there is no actual luck. I want reply by carefully distinguishing which of a subject's beliefs are relevant when considering whether the subject is lucky. As I've already mentioned, whether or not the agent believes himself to be lucky is immaterial. However, it seems obvious that some elements of a subject's point of view and epistemic state are relevant. If two players enter a rigged lottery with the same winning numbers, and one is an innocent player with no knowledge of how the game is rigged, and the other player is the one who rigged the lottery, then it seems that the innocent player is actually lucky to have won, while the player who rigged the lottery is not lucky to have won. What is relevant here is that one player knew which numbers were going to be selected (and hence, which numbers to choose) while the other player did not have this knowledge. The skeptic would insist that both players are only seemingly lucky (the innocent player seems lucky to everyone, while the other player seems lucky to everyone but himself), since with greater knowledge they would realize that these particular numbers were always due

[41] At this stage, I think it is a mistake to too narrowly identify the "moment of luck" by, for example, arguing whether a lottery winner is lucky to win the lottery, or if he is lucky to have chosen the numbers that he did, or if he is lucky to have bought the ticket for the drawing that he did, or if he is lucky that the balls selected were the one that they were, and so on.

to be selected. In fact, the skeptic might also say that, even in a fair lottery the winner in not actually lucky to win, since the numbers were always[42] bound to come up.

Still, even if we accept a fully-determined picture of the universe, it might be the case that, from a fully informed point of view, nothing appears lucky. However, given that we are actually quite limited, in terms of the information available to us when we plan and act, it seems far too strong to develop a version of the unreliability criterion that leads to nothing being categorized as abnormal, unusual, or out of the ordinary simply because of the supposed existence of an inaccessible point of view from which everything can be predicted. I am not able to meet this skeptic's challenge directly, here, other than to offer the following. Even if the skeptic is correct and there are not, in fact, any metaphysically real cases of luck, I do not think that it is really the task of a theory of luck to answer this challenge. Instead, so long as the appearance and possibility of luck persists, a theory of luck should produce, as Duncan Pritchard has nicely put it, "[conditions] relative to which the question of whether there are lucky events potentially has an answer."[43] In short, the existence of (potentially unattainable) point of view from which the unreliability criterion cannot be satisfied does not diminish my interest in accounting for the practice of adopting luck attitudes that does in fact exist, even if such a practice would disappear were we able to adopt an omniscient point of view.

8. Conclusion

To conclude, I think it is worthwhile to spend a moment considering the type of account I am interested in developing in the following chapters. First, it is important for any account of luck to maintain both of the core notions identified at the beginning of this chapter, in some

[42] Supposing that this skeptic endorses some version of physical determinism.

[43] Pritchard, Duncan. "The Modal Account of Luck." *The Philosophy of Luck.* Ed. Duncan Pritchard and Lee John Wittington. Wiley Blackwell, 2015, p.154.

form, if the account can be said to be an account of luck at all. Second, none of the uncontroversial luck cases I identified should turn out to not actually be cases of luck. On any complete account, we should still be lucky to win lotteries, to make correct guesses, and to find hidden treasure. As far as possible, I would also like to avoid begging the question against any of the non-superstitious luck claims we find it natural to make. While it can be tempting to write off certain common luck claims as cases of widespread conceptual confusion[44] due to some significant difference between these claims and the more paradigmatic ones, I think it will count as a mark in an account's favor if it can accommodate the fullest range of luck claims.

Along these lines I will want to avoid forwarding any kind of widespread error theory about luck claims. I will reject any account that leads to the conclusion that we are always, or nearly always, wrong when we identify cases that agree with the core notions of luck as being actually lucky. However, this is not to say that do not want to allow that we can be mistaken about our luck claims. We can always be mistaken about matters of fact. In addition to avoiding an error theory about luck, I also want to avoid forwarding an account that characterizes too many cases as lucky or unlucky. If the unreliability criterion has any teeth, then there must be cases where it is not met.

I think this approach does the best job of making sense of some common behavior involving luck claims. We often use luck claims derisively, distinguishing lucky gains from a person's earned gains implying that they are less (or that someone else is more) deserving of the benefit. In these situations, it is natural to argue whether the case in question really was or was not lucky. This disagreement only makes sense if we acknowledge a distinction between believing that someone is lucky and someone's actually being lucky. In fact, the reasons we

[44] Some theorists, such as Duncan Pritchard, do not operate under such a constraint. E. J. Coffman has developed a more robust error theory about luck in Coffman, E. J. "Thinking About Luck." *Synthese*, 158.3 (2007):385–398.

offer during such disagreements can provide a good basis for understanding the unreliability criterion. We often try to show that our seeming good luck was actually due to planning and effort on our part or that the case in question was not as unreliable as it may have seemed. On the other side, we also deny that others are unlucky when their loss comes from a situation that they could have foreseen and prevented or if the loss seems due to their own negligence or recklessness.

Importantly, I do not think it is necessary for a successful account of luck to maintain all of the basic intuitions identified in sections 3 and 4 of this chapter. It also is not necessary to resolve all of the conflicts between these intuitions. However, it will be beneficial if my account can at least explain the attractiveness of these basic intuitions, as well as the attractiveness of the vague conceptual equivalences used so often as a substitute for a more complete general account. In the following chapter, I discuss existing philosophical accounts of luck in detail, including the more developed general accounts presented Duncan Pritchard, Wayne Riggs, and Nicholas Rescher.

Chapter II: Treatments of Luck in Contemporary Philosophy

1. Introduction

Much of the philosophical literature on luck has been focused on particular theoretical problems arising in ethics and epistemology. The prevailing discussion of moral luck can be traced back to essays written by Bernard Williams[45] and Thomas Nagel,[46] in which a troubling tension is identified between the platitude that luck undermines moral responsibility and the observation that, in a sense, everything that practically grounds moral responsibility seems to be a matter of luck. The discussion of epistemic luck has focused on a similar platitude that luck is, in some sense, incompatible with knowledge. This has often led to a desire for a full-blown anti-luck epistemology. For example, Duncan Pritchard writes: "If the anti-luck platitude does reveal something deep and important about knowledge, then by undertaking the anti-luck epistemological project one should determine a core epistemic condition on knowledge."[47] This anti-luck intuition in epistemology has been highlighted by the Gettier counterexamples to the classic tripartite account of knowledge (as justified true belief).

The relevance of luck for an account of knowledge is fairly clear; after all, one of the more obvious ways a true belief might not count as knowledge would be by being the result of a lucky guess. On this level, a nuanced account of the luck involved might not seem necessary; perhaps we can rule out lucky guesses via other considerations, such as a restriction to justified

[45] Williams, Bernard. "Moral Luck." *Moral Luck.* Cambridge University Press, 1981. 20-39.

[46] Nagel, Thomas. "Moral Luck." *Moral Luck.* Ed. Daniel Statman. State University of New York Press, 1993. 57-72.

[47] Pritchard, Duncan. "The Modal Account of Luck." *The Philosophy of Luck.* Ed. Duncan Pritchard and Lee John Wittington. Wiley Blackwell, 2015, p. 143.

true beliefs. However, the enduring importance of understanding luck for understanding knowledge has been highlighted with the following kind of case:

> Stopped clock: Alice sees a clock that reads two o'clock. She believes it is two o'clock, and that is true. However, unknown to Alice, the clock she's looking at stopped twelve hours ago. So, she has a true, justified belief that, intuitively does not count as knowledge.[48]

This kind of example is meant to show that Alice does not really possess knowledge of the time because an unacceptable amount of luck led to her true belief. Similar examples have been offered by others, the most notorious perhaps by Edmund Gettier.[49] As some have noted, these types of cases typically involve some kind of double luck,[50] with one stroke (e.g. the bad luck of the clock stopping) being cancelled out by an equally strong stroke of luck in the opposite direction (the coincidence of the clock stopping exactly twelve hours prior).

It is important to note that, for my present purposes, I want to avoid leaning to heavily on difficult cases like these where pre-reflective intuitions cannot be a particularly useful guide. If one general theory of luck leads to counterintuitive implications for knowledge ascriptions in cases like these, this could as easily be due to a misunderstanding of knowledge as to a misunderstanding of luck. With that in mind, I will try to limit my discussion to examples where the stakes are more mundane, and the non-luck concepts invoked are relatively less complicated.

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[48] References to cases of this kind can be traced as far back as Bertrand Russell's. *The Problems of Philosophy.* 1912. *Project Gutenberg*. Web. 18 Aug. 2015. In Chapter XIII, he proposes a similar cases where a person believes that the previous prime minister's last name began with a 'B,' although this belief is only coincidentally true and based on his mistaken belief that the previous prime minister was Balfour when it was really Bannerman.

[49] Gettier, Edmund. "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" *Analysis*, 23 (1963):121-123.

[50] For example, see Zagzaebski, Linda. "What is Knowledge." *Epistemology*. Ed. John Greco and Ernest Sosa. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1999. 92-116.

However, after presenting my advantage-based account of luck in Chapter V, I will return to these cases and suggest how my account might inform our approach to tackling them.

Despite my aim in developing a general account of luck in the expectation that it will ground a stronger way of approaching these specific philosophical questions, at this stage, it is not my intention to engage with these questions at length. I will be looking at existing treatments of luck as a general concept only; I will not address how each account discussed is or is not adequate to address specific problems in ethics and epistemology. Rather, I am interested in the ways that these treatments of luck are useful for developing the kind of account I outlined in Chapter I; I seek a broad account that accommodates or explains all of the everyday luck claims that we make while also providing a way of explaining the everyday practice of adopting and justifying a special class of luck attitudes.

To this end, section 2 is dedicated to addressing one of the most common ways luck is described in philosophical writing, via some very general characterizations in terms of closely related concepts of accident, indeterminacy, low probability, and lack of control. My aim in this section is to illustrate the prima facie difficulties associated with each characterization that make me hesitant to ground any robust account of luck in terms of these related concepts. The next three sections of this chapter are dedicated to a discussion of three more developed accounts of luck, presented by Duncan Pritchard, Wayne Riggs, and Nicholas Rescher. While I will ultimately disagree with each of these accounts, discussion of them will help show the rationale behind certain features of my account. The criticisms offered in this chapter are not meant to be taken as full-blown conclusive arguments against the positions described; rather, I offer these criticisms as a way of picking out the difficulties raised by such accounts that have inspired the details of the advantage-based account I propose in Chapter V.

I will make one final caveat before moving on to the main sections of this chapter; the majority of the accounts I will engage with in this chapter have tended to focus on luck primarily as a feature of events. The most common form of a luck statement analyzed in contemporary philosophical writing is 'An event, E, is lucky for a subject, S.' As I have discussed in the preceding chapter,[51] my account will focus on the relation between subjects and states of affairs instead and will offer 'A subject S is lucky that P' as the canonical form of a luck statement. Therefore, in order to engage directly with the accounts presented in this chapter, I will generally follow along and discuss these accounts and various cases raised by them in terms of the relevant events, rather than in terms of states-of-affairs.

2. Undeveloped Treatments of Luck: Accidents, Low Probability, and Lack of Control

I want to begin this section by considering the possibility of accounting for luck by appealing to the concept of an accident. Peter Unger describes his anti-luck epistemology in terms of accidents: "For any sentential value of p, a man's belief that p is an instance of knowledge only if it is not an accident that the man's belief is true."[52] More dramatically, Carolyn Morillo seems to treat the terms 'luck' and 'accident' as interchangeable. She poses the question, "How much luck or accident is involved in knowing?" and moves freely between the concept of a "lucky guess" and an "accidentally true belief."[53] How plausible is it that we understand luck in terms of accidents?

I think that there are a few different ways we might want to go about explicating the connection between luck and accidents. First, there is a sense of accident that is understood as a complement to deliberateness or intentionality. On one understanding, those things that I do

[51] See p. 24.

[52] Unger, Peter. "An Analysis of Factual Knowledge." *The Journal of Philosophy*, 65.6 (1968), p.157.

[53] Morillo, Carolyn. "Epistemic Luck, Naturalistic Epistemology, and the Ecology of Knowledge." *Philosophical Studies*, 46 (1984), p.109.

accidentally are just those things that I do but do *not* do intentionally. However, this understanding of accident does not seem to line up with common intuitions about basic cases of luck, cutting too closely and too broadly at the same time.

Consider the case of an ordinary lottery player. If she wins, this is a canonical case of good luck. However, do we want to say that this is because she does not win the lottery intentionally? Presumably, she entered with the express intention to win; the reason for buying the ticket to enter the lottery was for the sake of winning the lottery. As Pritchard and Smith have noted, "if one deliberately bought the ticket in question and, say, one self-consciously choose [*sic*] the winning numbers, then to call the resulting outcome an 'accident' appears conceptually confused."[54] In addition to this kind of example, the notion of luck as accident (where accident is understood in terms of deliberateness) also falls short in explaining cases of recklessness and negligence. If a driver fails to take certain ordinary precautions and ends up crashing his vehicle, it seems clear that this was unintentional; the classic case of an automobile accident. However, do we really want to say that the reckless driver is unlucky to crash? If anything, I think we would want to say that what happened to the driver was, in a sense, the expected result of his recklessness. Even if we want to say that the reckless driver is unlucky to crash (perhaps because this kind of recklessness often does not result in a crash), what do we say about the reckless driver who makes it home safely? Surely he is lucky to avoid suffering in light of his recklessness. But just as clearly, the driver intended to get home safely; even if he fails to take the appropriate precautions this does not amount to his intending to crash.

So, let us consider another understanding of accident that might better align with common intuitions about luck. For example, we might consider accident as another way of

[54] Pritchard, Duncan and Michael Smith. "The Psychology and Philosophy of Luck." *New Ideas in Psychology*, 22 (2004), p.5.

expressing something about the chanciness or indeterminacy of a case. William Harper, for example, observed that the concept of luck "overlaps with both 'accident' and 'chance' "[55] and has moved freely between describing cases of epistemic luck in terms of "a matter of chance that their belief is true"[56] and "the truth of the belief in question is a matter of luck."[57] Harper is interested in establishing knowledge in terms of a "*certain* connection between justification and truth."[58] So, we can see some reason to interpret the idea of accident in terms of indeterminacy or contingency, in contrast to those events that happen necessarily.

There is quick a lot of intuitive appeal to thinking of luck in terms of indeterminacy; after all, the paraphernalia of luck is all about the creation of (or at least the appearance of) indeterminate outcomes. Playing cards, dice, and roulette wheels all signal that there is luck to experience and that outcomes are uncertain. However, there are difficulties for this interpretation of luck as well, as the presence of certainty will too often be an all or nothing affair. Even setting aside metaphysical concerns concerning widespread causal determinism and the possibility of genuine metaphysical indeterminacy, the idea that luck is involved whenever there is indeterminacy (merely from the point of view of a particular subject or more deeply) does not hold up to closer examination because it leaves far too much in the domain of luck.

From a limited, human point of view, much of life is uncertain. Consider something as simple as crossing the street. While I have a very reasonable expectation to make it to the other side safely, I must admit to some degree of uncertainty when I do attempt to cross. I could easily imagine tripping and falling, being hit by a car, or even having a meteor land on my head.

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[55] Harper, William. "Knowledge and Luck." *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 34 (1996), p.273.

[56] ibid, p.274.

[57] ibid, p.275.

[58] ibid, p.274.

However, it seems far too extreme to say that every time I cross the street safely that I am lucky to do so. Intuitively, I would be unlucky to experience any of the imagined hardships (except for falling, perhaps, if I am a particularly uncoordinated individual). We should not infer that my crossing safely, as I tend to do several times a day, is lucky because of the intuitive bad luck that would be involved in these extreme, but possible, counterfactual situations.

As Pritchard and Smith have noted, "it ought to be uncontroversial that at least some lucky events are not brought about by indeterminate factors."[59] Although they do not elaborate on this point, I believe a simple example can be constructed by imaging a physical system too complicated for an average person to make confident predictions. Consider a billiard ball falling off of a roof onto a pile of miscellaneous garbage, such that it bounces around and ends up striking a pedestrian. Even though the path of the ball is completely determined, according to physical laws, the pedestrian still seems unlucky that he is struck. After all, the pedestrian was not in any position to anticipate the ball hurtling at him, and, even if he were to observe the entire process, he would not be able to compute the speed and angles involved in a way that would allow him to predict and avoid the path of the ball. This bad luck on the part of the pedestrian does not seem to emerge from an indeterminate process so much as from the coincidence of his being in the path of the billiard ball.

There is room to bite the bullet here, of course, and to say something like, in a very strict sense, there is *some* luck whenever there is indeterminacy and significance. On this view, likely situations involve only a very small amount of luck such that we tend not to acknowledge it, while less likely situations involve such a large amount of luck that the luck becomes salient to us. The case of the pedestrian being struck by a billiard ball can be taken care of by claiming that, from the point of view of the pedestrian, the path of the ball might as well have been

[59] Pritchard and Smith, p. 5.

indeterminate. Running along these lines, this kind of account could also explain why the stakes involved in a putatively lucky case matter to us; for example, if I am playing a game of Russian Roulette, it does not really matter that I am more likely than not to survive a given round. I am *clearly* lucky, not because of the long odds involved, but because I am leaving my survival up to chance. As the stakes go up, the amount of luck needed to make the chanciness involved salient goes down. Of course, I believe that we can develop a more nuanced and useful account if we decide not to bite the bullet in this way.

Another natural way of thinking about luck is in terms of low probabilities. For a rough characterization of such an account, let's start with the following: a state of affairs is lucky for a person if it is significant for that person and the state of affairs is the result of a low probability event. For the moment, I will set aside the question of whether the probability involved should be interpreted as some kind of objective probability or as a subjective probability from some subject's point of view. My aim here is just to show the *prima facie* difficulties that lead me away from developing a theory of luck along these lines, not to reply to a sophisticated version of the account. My misgivings with the probability based approach will apply regardless of the specific way we understand the probabilities involved.

This kind of account is intuitively appealing, as canonical cases of luck, such as winning lotteries, finding buried treasure, and lucky guesses are all easily thought of in terms of the low probabilities involved. Also, there is an intuitive sense in which probabilities affect degrees of luck; the less probable a certain outcome is, the luckier it is. However, there are a number of examples that may cause difficulties:

1. Even odds: Adam is lucky to win a flip of a fair coin.
2. Constitutive luck: Betsy is lucky to be a citizen of an affluent democratic country.

3. High probability luck: Carl is lucky to survive his turn at Russian Roulette.
4. High probability constitutive luck: Dana is lucky to not have been born blind.
5. No clear probability: Eric is lucky to make it home safely, even though he was driving while drunk.

For each of these cases, the proponent of the probability account (hereafter, 'probability theorist') might offer reinterpretations along the following lines:

1. Even odds: Although it is not clear that 50% is, intuitively, a low probability, and drawing a hard line somewhere between 50% and 51% might seem to lead to a sorites paradox, the probability theorist can simply bite the bullet and accept the vagueness of 'luck' and 'low probability' as concepts. It may be a virtue that the vagueness of one is reflected in the other.
2. Constitutive luck: Although it may not appear, on the surface, that Betsy's being a citizen of an affluent democratic country is the result of a low probability event, we can offer an interpretation in terms of low probability along the following lines: since more people are not citizens of affluent-and-democratic countries than are citizens of affluent-and-democratic countries, there is a low probability that a single, randomly-selected person is a citizen of an affluent-and-democratic country. In this sense, there is a low probability of any particular person (Betsy included) being a citizen of an affluent-and-democratic country.
3. High probability luck: Although Carl is intuitively lucky to survive a round of Russian Roulette, this may not actually be in light of the probability of his pulling the trigger on an unloaded chamber. Instead, the probability theorist may argue that the luck involved in inherited from the comparative probability of surviving if he engages in a game of

Russian Roulette versus the probability of surviving if he does not engage is the game. Carl appears lucky because he has engaged in a course of action that causes the probability of the advantageous outcome (not dying suddenly) to be dramatically lower than otherwise.

4. High probability constitutive luck: Dana's case, I think, is the most difficult kind of case for the probability theorist to explain. They can start by comparing Dana to the entire global population, as in the case of Betsy's constitutive luck, but most people are not born blind. The explanation offered for Carl's high probability luck will not work here, since Dana hasn't done anything to make herself more likely to be born blind. However, this is also the kind of case where I think the probability theorist has the strongest reasons for claiming that our intuitive, pre-reflective use of 'luck' is simply in error. Since not being born blind really is the normal case (and doesn't seem to satisfy the unreliability criterion),[60] the probability theorist is probably happy claiming that Dana is not, in fact, lucky, and the claim that she is lucky involves confusing 'luckiness' with mere 'fortunateness' or another similar concept.
5. No clear probability: In cases of recklessness where we do not have an intuitive sense of the probabilities involved (or how we might go about measuring them), the probability theorist can respond in a similar manner as the case of high probability luck. Eric appears lucky because he has engaged in a course of action that causes the probability of the advantageous outcome (driving home safely), whatever that probability might be, to be dramatically lower than otherwise.

The explanations offered here seem to be enough to argue that a probability theorist can construct a coherent account of luck based on low probabilities, and might even be able to

[60] See p.8

construct an account that matches our intuitions about which cases clearly qualify as lucky or unlucky, which cases clearly do not qualify as clearly lucky and unlucky, and which cases are vague or too close to call. For the probability theorist, our intuitions about luck simply rely on a sensitivity to the salient low probabilities involved.

Ultimately, what is missing in an account built on the notion of low probability is an explanation of why we employ the machinery to manufacture a salient low probability in some cases rather than others. Why is it that 'high probability' cases like 3 above should be reinterpreted as cases of low comparative probability, while cases like a master archer shooting against a novice without warming up[61] do not get this treatment? Additionally, employing this kind of conceptual machinery does not seem to get at what I am most concerned about when looking for a unified account of luck. While accommodating all cases of luck under the heading 'low probability' might be useful conceptual shorthand, it does not capture what it is about these cases that motivates, and typically justifies, the luck attitudes that we adopt.

Finally, I want to address the possibility of distinguishing luck loosely[62] in terms of a subject's lack of control. Here, I am interested the descriptions of luck that emerge from the earliest discussions of moral luck, famously presented by Bernard Williams[63] and Thomas Nagel.[64] In his writing, Williams deliberately avoids giving any direct definition of luck:

> I shall use the notion of 'luck' generously, undefinedly, but, I think, comprehensibly. It will be clear that when I say of something that it is a matter of luck, this is not meant to carry any implication that it is uncaused. My procedure in general will be to invite reflection about how to think and feel about some less usual situations, in the light of an

[61] Here, I take it for granted that the master archer is not lucky to win against the novice, even though he has reduced his chances by not warming up.

[62] A more developed control-based account, as presented by Wayne Riggs, will be discussed in section 4.

[63] Williams, Bernard. "Moral Luck." *Moral Luck.* Cambridge University Press, 1981. 20-39.

[64] Nagel, Thomas. "Moral Luck." *Moral Luck.* Ed. Daniel Statman. State University of New York Press, 1993. 57-72.

> appeal to how we – many people – tend to think and feel about other more usual situations.[65]

Despite his intentionally leaving the concept undefined, we can see some familiar features in what he does say about luck. For one, the unreliability criterion seems to be acknowledged by his focus on 'less usual situations' as compared to 'more usual' ones. Following a discussion where he briefly distinguishes between constitutive luck (presumably, luck in which capacities and dispositions a person has) and incident luck (presumably, luck in the way things turn out external to a person), he writes, "Anything which is the product of happy or unhappy contingency is no proper object of moral assessment, and no proper determinant of it, either."[66] So, although Williams will not go on to offer a more developed account of what it is to be lucky (or unlucky), it is not hard to see the seeds of the control-based treatment that will be given by Nagel and others. The idea that some of what we do is the 'product of happy or unhappy contingency' will, to some, read as a division between that which is in our control and that which is outside of our control.

Nagel generates the problem of moral luck by appeal to intuitions of the following kind:

1. We should not be morally assessed positively for being lucky or negatively for being unlucky (that is, we should not be positively assessed if our actions turn out well or negatively if they turn out poorly if their turning out well or poorly is a matter of luck).
2. What a person has done provides the grounds for morally assessing that person (that is, what a person has done provides the reasons for thinking that that person is a good or bad person).

[65] Williams, 37

[66] Ibid, 35.

3. How a person's actions turn out (and consequently, what a person has done), on close inspection, is (almost) always a matter of luck.

Nagel's classic discussion captures 1 as a control principle; "prior to reflection it is intuitively plausible that people cannot be morally assessed for what is not their fault, or for what is due to factors beyond their control."[67] To the extent that his discussion can be taken to show a tension between moral assessment and luck in general (and not between moral assessment and a specific variety of luck), he seems to be defining luck in terms of control, such that anything outside of our control is (to that extent) a matter of luck. A paradox appears when Nagel observes that the "things for which people are morally judged are determined in more ways than we at first realize by what is beyond their control,"[68] and because of this, "if the condition of control is consistently applied, it threatens to erode most of the moral assessments we find it natural to make."[69] The problem that Nagel thinks this reveals is that our ordinary practice of moral assessment undermines itself; when we ordinarily morally assess a person, we only count 'what she has done' as evidence if it is not influenced by luck (following 1), but what a person has done is unavoidably influenced by luck (following 2 and 3).

Setting aside the question of whether or not such a definition is adequate for Nagel's purposes in discussing the problem of moral luck, how useful is thinking of luck in terms of control for developing a more general account? There is considerable intuitive appeal. Several authors besides Nagel have used the notion of control as the basis for their own discussions of luck. Consider, from Anders Shinkel: "I believe a common-sense definition of luck will suffice. We call something a matter of (good or bad) luck when 1) it is of interest or importance to us, 2)

[67] Nagel, 58.

[68] Ibid, 59.

[69] Ibid.

it was not under our control, and 3) we had no reason to expect its occurrence."[70] Or, from Daniel Statman: "good luck occurs when something good happens to an agent P, its occurrence being beyond P's control. Similarly, bad luck occurs when something bad happens to an agent P, its occurrence being beyond his control."[71] Thinking about luck in terms of control might seem to get to the heart of the matter when we are interested in the problems of moral luck and responsibility, but how useful is it for thinking about luck in a more general way?

The first issue that we run into when thinking about luck in terms of control is that there are several candidates for the relevant sense of 'control' involved. On one extreme, we might think of an extremely stringent definition of control; if, from a given state of affairs, a person is able to choose and bring about any of the possible subsequent states of affairs and is informed fully of the consequences of doing so, they are said to be in control. On the far other extreme we might say, if, from a given state of affairs, the person's actions have any influence on a subsequent state of affairs, they are said to be in control. The relevant notion of control is probably found somewhere in the middle, but it is not clear how to cash it out.

Michael Zimmerman's account of the problem of moral luck can help us move toward this middle ground. In contrast to my reading of the problem of moral luck in terms of moral assessment, he describes the problem as arising from the following argument about moral responsibility:[72]

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[70] Schinkel, Anders. "The Problem of Moral Luck: An Argument Against its Epistemic Reduction." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*. 12 (2009), p. 269.

[71] Statman, Daniel. "Moral and Epistemic Luck." *Ratio*. 4.2 (1991), p.146.

[72] The main difference between Zimmerman's construction of the problem and my own is that his sense of responsibility is about a person's worthiness of "praise and blame… of a particular, inactive sort, consisting in a positive or negative evaluation of the agent in light of the event in question" (Zimmerman, Michael J. "Luck and Moral Responsibility." *Moral Luck.* Ed. Daniel Statman. State University of New York Press, 1993, p. 218). On my understanding of the problem, consideration of the practical consequences of our practice of praising and blaming (or not praising and not blaming) is what makes the problem of moral luck so difficult and enduring. Nothing of substance for the discussion of a control-based account of luck will hinge on this difference.

1. A person P is morally responsible for an event *e*'s occurring only if *e*'s occurring was not a matter of luck.
2. No event is such that it's occurring is not a matter of luck.

Therefore

3. No event is such that P is morally responsible for its occurring.[73]

He suggests that the premises of this argument appear true, but the conclusion appears false. Zimmerman offers two ways of understanding the luck involved in terms of control. First, "one may be said to enjoy *restricted* control with respect to some event just in case one can bring about its occurrence and can also prevent its occurrence."[74] Second, he describes another kind of control in terms of restricted control: "One may be said to enjoy *unrestricted* or *complete* control with respect to some event just in case one enjoys or enjoyed restricted control with respect both to it and to all those events on which its occurrence is contingent."[75] He goes on to offer a reading of the problem in two ways, with luck defined in terms of each type of control. On the first reading, *e*'s occurring is a matter of luck if and only if P was in restricted control of *e*. On the second reading, *e*'s occurring is a matter of luck if and only if P was in unrestricted control of *e*. Zimmerman's diagnosis of the problem, then, is that the second premise is plainly false on the first reading, while the first premise is plainly false on the second reading.

I will avoid discussing Zimmerman's treatment of moral luck at too much length and instead turn to ask if his notions of restricted and unrestricted control are helpful for the task of providing a general account of luck, rather than addressing the problem of moral luck specifically. To start, using unrestricted control to identify luck is going to run into some clear

[73] Zimmerman, Michael J. "Luck and Moral Responsibility." *Moral Luck.* Ed. Daniel Statman. State University of New York Press, 1993, p. 217.

[74] Ibid, 219.

[75] Ibid.

difficulties. If we consider the simplest examples of luck, cases of lotteries won, treasures found, and correct guesses, our account of luck should at very minimum be able to explain why a person is lucky to win the lottery, but not lucky to earn the same money through hard work. It should explain why a person is lucky to guess correctly, but they are not lucky if they, in some sense, really know the answer. The notion of unrestricted control does not seem to help us make these distinctions; as Nagel has observed, whatever we *are* able to bring about always seems contingent on at least some events over which we did not have restricted control.

So, let us turn to the idea of restricted control and ask if this is any more helpful in accounting for these simple examples. Looking at a lucky versus non-lucky guess, the idea of restricted control does seem to get it right. If I really know the answer, than my giving a correct answer seems in my restricted control (that is, I have the ability to deliberately give the correct answer, and I have the ability to deliberately avoid giving the right answer). If I do not know the answer, I do not have this kind of control over whether or not I give a correct answer. This version of control helps us distinguish between money won in a lottery and money earned through hard work in the same way.

However, accounting for luck using restricted control does seem to miss some other intuitive luck evaluations. For example, we would have to say that losing the lottery is bad luck; a person's ability to bring about a win or a loss in a fair lottery is the same. Also, where does this leave our understanding of the case of finding treasure during a walk through the woods? Surely I do not have restricted control over whether or not I discover hidden treasure (and am therefore lucky), but would we really want to say that every time I walk through the woods, lacking the same kind of restricted control over whether or not I find treasure, and I do not find treasure, that I am unlucky?

Something that seems missing when we try to account for luck via a loose connection to lack of control is an intuitive asymmetry in how we make luck evaluations. If we identify luck merely with lack of control (restricted or otherwise), we will find that the results of an uncertain case will only affect whether the luck is good or bad, it will not affect whether there is luck at all. For example, if we consider a lottery, we have the same lack of control whether we win or lose; the proponent of a control-based account of luck would need to say, then, that we are lucky if we win *and unlucky if we lose*. However, this does not seem to match the everyday way that we identify luck. When we see an opportunity for luck, such as a lottery, there seems to be an understood, non-lucky normal case (losing the lottery). Similarly, when we walk through the woods, we think that finding the treasure is lucky because the normal case is to not find treasure. There is not a strong intuition that we are unlucky to fail to find treasure, unless we had some to reason to expect that we would.

So, it appears that, despite some initial intuitive appeal, there is no straightforward, unproblematic way of accounting for luck in terms of accident, indeterminacy, low probability, or lack of control. In the following sections, I will turn to some more developed contemporary accounts of luck. Most of the recent philosophical literature on luck has been directed at addressing particular questions; for example, in the previous section we saw Zimmerman's construction of a control-based idea of luck for the express purpose of accounting for the apparent problem of moral luck. The first two accounts I will address are interesting in the way that they aim to address particular philosophical problems in epistemology by developing a general account of luck itself, which is much closer to the kind of account I described at the end of Chapter I.[76] The final treatment of luck that I will discuss, offered by Nicholas Rescher, is

[76] See pp. 35-37.

distinguished as a purely general account of luck; it is not presented in a way that indicates its application for any subsequent philosophical aim.

3. The Modal Account

The first more developed account of luck that I want to address is presented by Duncan Pritchard. In 2005, he neatly expressed his modal account with the following two conditions:

> (L1) If an event is lucky, then it is an event that occurs in the actual world but which does not occur in a wide class of the nearest possible worlds where the relevant initial conditions for that event are the same as in the actual world.[77]
>
> (L2) If an event is lucky, then it is an event that is significant to the agent concerned (or would be significant, were the agent to be availed of the relevant facts).[78]

These conditions have sometimes been taken to be individually necessary and jointly sufficient[79] for an event to be lucky; however, Pritchard has since clarified his position as a continuum picture of the luckiness of an event, such that some further specification would be needed to establish exactly where the threshold for luckiness lies:

> More generally, we can say that the degree of luck involved varies in line with the modal closeness of the world in which the target event doesn't obtain (but where the initial conditions for that event are kept fixed). We would thus have a *continuum* picture of the luckiness of an event, from very lucky to not (or hardly) lucky at all. Once the degree of luck falls below a certain level—i.e., once there is not modally close world where the target event doesn't obtain—then we would naturally classify the event as not lucky, since it does not involve a significant degree of luck.[80]

The continuum view of luck is certainly appealing. It not only explains the intuitive way we are able to compare the relative luckiness of two or more cases, but it also allows captures the

[77] Pritchard, Duncan. *Epistemic Luck*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005, p. 128.

[78] ibid, p. 132.

[79] Lackey, Jennifer. "What Luck is Not." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 86.2 (2008):255-267.

[80] Pritchard, 2015, p. 149, emphasis his.

vagueness in the way we use the concept in borderline cases (for example, it is not intuitively clear whether I am lucky to win something like the toss of a fair coin, where the odds are, presumably, fifty-fifty).

Thinking of Pritchard's modal account as a continuum picture of luck with a certain degree of deliberate vagueness is helpful in understanding the details of L1. First, Pritchard's account is focused on the constitution of a lucky event; presumably, claims that a person is lucky should be understood as claims that the person is the beneficiary of a lucky event. Similarly, if a state of affairs can be lucky on Pritchard's account, it will only be through its relationship to a relevant lucky event. If we consider all possible worlds ordered according to their similarity to the actual world, an event will be lucky if it does not occur in a sufficient number of the sufficiently close possible worlds. This picture is deliberately vague in two ways; the event gets luckier as the *quantity* of sufficiently nearby possible worlds where it does not occur gets greater, and the event gets luckier as the *distance* (from the actual world) at which a sufficient number of possible worlds are ones where the event does not occur gets greater. This seems to mirror common intuitions about how the luck of certain events might be compared. In a lottery case, winning the lottery will be luckier as the number of losing tickets is increased (the possible worlds where the event does not occur grows). Similarly, an event that results from two coincidences will be luckier than one that results from a single coincidence (there will be a further group of possible worlds where only one of the coincidences occurs, but the event does not occur). For example, if I win an archery contest with a lucky shot because a gust of wind blew my arrow into the bulls-eye, this is less lucky than if I win because a gust of wind blew my

arrow in just the right way *and* some seismic activity shook the target into the new path of my arrow.[81]

Modal distance is distinct from probability, however understood. While the probability of an event occurring might vary with the *quantity* of nearby possible worlds where the event does not occur, it does not correlate to the *distance* of those worlds. Pritchard writes:

> The lottery case reminds us that an event can be modally close even when probabilistically unlikely. That is, the possible world in which one wins a lottery, while probabilistically far-fetched, is in fact modally close. The possible world in which one is leaping about with joy in one's room because one is a lottery winner is very alike to the possible world in which one is tearing one's ticket up in disgust—all that needs to change is that a few coloured balls fall in a slightly different configuration.[82]

When we consider the distance of another possible world, we should be concerned with how different that world is from the actual world, i.e. how much would need to change to make the actual world into that possible world.

Next, we need to be careful in the way we identify the event under consideration; Pritchard does this by insisting that the relevant initial conditions for the event remain fixed across the possible worlds under consideration. He writes:

> What is meant here by the 'initial conditions for the event'? The point of this restriction is that we need to keep certain features of the actual world fixed in our evaluation of the close worlds. In particular cases, it is usually pretty clear what needs to remain fixed. In the lottery case, for example, we obviously need to keep fixed that the subject buys a lottery ticket and that the lottery retains many of its salient features (i.e., remains free and fair, with long odds, and so on). If, say, one were *guaranteed* to win the lottery (e.g., it is rigged in one's favour), then clearly this isn't a lucky event even if, as it happens, there are close possible worlds in which one does not win the lottery (e.g., because one is prevented from buying a lottery ticket in such worlds).[83]

[81] Examples of multiple coincidences will, of course, seem terribly contrived.

[82] Pritchard, 2015, p. 145.

[83] ibid, p. 148, emphasis his.

Here, Pritchard is careful to distinguish the event of winning the lottery from the event of buying a lottery ticket; depending on the circumstances, one event might be lucky while the other is not. However, the way that Pritchard would have us decide which initial conditions to leave fixed is not very clear; Pritchard answers, "my suspicion is that we shouldn't expect anything more detailed, in that we shouldn't require a theory to be any more precise than the phenomenon about which we are theorizing."[84] I am inclined to agree with Pritchard on this point. As I will discuss in Chapter IV,[85] in common usage luck is uncodified and there is a desirable flexibility to leaving a certain amount of imprecision in our accounts of it, so long as the imprecision of the theory mirrors the imprecision in common use.

A further concern that Pritchard is sensitive to is whether or not this picture of ordered possible worlds makes sense. He writes:

> Even setting aside concerns about the metaphysics of possible worlds, there are problems with the ordering itself. For example, it has been argued that there is no unique closest possible world to the actual world and also that there need be no fact of the matter regarding which of any two given possible worlds is closer to the actual world. Should problems like these regarding possible worlds concern us?[86]

Pritchard's answer to these concerns is that these concerns would not pose a special difficulty for the modal account of luck; any understanding of luck that is as coarse-grained as the modal account would face similar challenges. In fact, it seems desirable to have a coarse-grained conception of luck; as Pritchard puts it, this is "in keeping with our normal ways of thinking about luck."[87] I agree with Pritchard's response to these challenges; a good account of luck need

[84] ibid.

[85] See pp. 124-128.

[86] Pritchard, 2015, p. 155.

[87] ibid.

not be more fine-grained than the common usage (which is uncodified and admits considerable vagueness) it is meant to capture.

Since 2005, Pritchard has updated his view to remove L2, his significance condition. He writes:

> I have now come to the conclusion that the very idea of adding a significance condition to the modal account of luck is wrongheaded…we shouldn't expect an account of the metaphysics of lucky events to be responsive to such subjective factors as whether an event is the kind of thing that people care about enough to regard as lucky. That's just not part of the load that a metaphysical account of luck should be expected to carry.[88]

It is important to note how Pritchard's general account of luck thus diverges strongly from the project I outlined in Chapter I. I am interested in accounting for the general use of the concept employed in claims that are (at least implicitly) of the form, 'S is lucky that P.' In contrast, Pritchard is accounting for luck directly as an "objective feature of events."[89] In Chapter IV, I will address this general approach to theorizing about luck; calling it the matter of luck approach, I argue that it does not do enough to account for the ordinary practices surrounding our pre-theoretical use of the concept 'luck.' Also, in Chapter III, I will argue that the significance condition deserves more careful attention than it has traditionally received, and even criteria like L2 do not do enough to capture the nuance of how significance is involved in cases of luck. Without going into much greater detail here, I am most interested in engaging with the version of Pritchard's account that does acknowledge significance by including L2. While there is room to define a separate concept (objective matters of luck) from the one I am most interested in (luck as a concept that captures a combination of unreliability and significance), accounts that do not acknowledge both of the core notions I outlined in Chapter I are, in a sense, 'talking past' the kind of account I am interested in developing. That being said, even if our ultimate aims are

[88] ibid, p. 153.

[89] ibid.

different, it is interesting to consider whether some version of a modal account that allows for a significance criterion (like Pritchard's earlier account) could be useful for my purposes.

Given an understanding of Pritchard's modal account that includes L2 (or another plausible significance criterion), I now want to look at some criticisms that have been levied against the modal account, often in the form of supposed counterexamples. First, I want to consider the following case, suggested by Nicholas Rescher:

> Secret benefactor: Suppose that Seth is an eccentric, wealthy individual who intends to send a check for a large sum of money to his nephew, Tobias on his twenty second birthday. However, Seth and Tobias have never met, and Tobias has no way of knowing about his wealthy uncle. When Seth does send the money to Tobias, he does so by mailing a check with no information that would allow Tobias to ascertain where the money came from.[90]

Rescher suggests that Tobias would be lucky to receive this money due to his inability to predict that it will happen.

> a happy or unhappy development can be a matter of luck from the recipient's point of view even if its eventuation is the result of a deliberate contrivance by others. (Your secret benefactor's sending you that big check represents a stroke of good luck for you even if it is something that he has been planning for years). Thus even if someone else–different from the person affected–is able to predict that unexpected development, the eventuation at issue may still be lucky for those who are involved.[91]

Rescher is suggesting a kind of subject-sensitivity to luck that is absent from Pritchard's account. Pritchard's focus on the status of events as 'objectively lucky' leads to the following response:

> It is far from clear that this is a case of luck, however, no matter how much the agent may regard it as such. Indeed, the example seems more accurately to be an instance of good

[90] Rescher does not offer a detailed description of the secret benefactor case; I have taken the liberty of adding small details to his description, such as names for the involved parties, to facilitate the following discussion. Rescher, Nicholas. *Luck: The Brilliant Randomness of Everyday Life.* University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995. p.35.

[91] ibid.

> fortune rather than luck, where fortune relates to those cases where certain events that one has no control over count in one's favour (where fortune smiles on one) rather than cases where luck is specifically involved… In order to see this, one need only note that if the agent were to discover that this event had been carefully planned all along, then he would plausibly no longer regard it as a lucky event.[92]

Pritchard addresses this example in his own writing to emphasize the irrelevance of the affected subject's epistemic state for his modal account.

However, this response from Pritchard strikes me as somewhat strange, as the case of the secret benefactor does seem to be covered by his modal account. While the temporal distance between Seth deciding to send money to his unknown nephew and the act of actually sending it might mean that the possible worlds where Tobias receives the money are more distant or fewer in number,[93] there does seem to be a lucky event in light of which Tobias is lucky; very little would have to change for Seth to decide not to send the money to Tobias. The lucky event, on the modal account, is Seth's deciding or planning to send the money. However, Pritchard's claim that "if the agent were to discover that this event had been carefully planned all along, then he would plausibly no longer regard it as a lucky event" seems rather counterintuitive. If Tobias were to discover the source of the money, why would he then stop viewing this as a lucky event? Moreover, why would we treat his gaining the money in this way any differently from his gaining a similar fortune from a lottery? Even if receiving the money is, as Pritchard says, "a long-standing and important feature of the agent's life,"[94] it seems like we do, for good reason, treat Tobias's receiving money in this way more like money received in a lottery than money

[92] Pritchard, Duncan. "Epistemic Luck." *Journal of Philosophical Research*, 29 (2004), p.217.

[93] I am not sure that this is even the case. It is not clear to me that increasing the temporal distance between Seth deciding to send the money and Tobias receiving the money necessarily means that more features of the actual world would need to be changed to make it a world where Tobias does not receive the money. However, I will tentatively grant this point to follow along with Pritchard's own treatment of the case.

[94] Pritchard 2015, p. 158.

earned through hard work. Acknowledging the possible competing intuitions here (although Pritchard's intuition does strike me as very strange), it still seems that Tobias would be treated as lucky according to our everyday practices and attitudes about luck.

Pritchard seems to be suggesting that an event caused by a lucky event is not necessarily lucky itself.[95] Tobias may be lucky to be chosen to receive the money from Seth, but, according to Pritchard, he is not lucky to receive that money if that event is temporally distant from the earlier lucky event. It is odd to me that Pritchard would want to fix the initial conditions for the event of Tobias receiving the money in this way. Tobias receiving the money only fails to satisfy L1 if we hold fixed the fact that Seth has decided to bestow him with that money. In fact, the larger event of Seth deciding to give Tobias the money and then Tobias receiving the money at the determined time seems to be the event we really want to evaluate the luckiness of, and this seems to be intuitively lucky and to satisfy L1.

Additionally, despite Pritchard's efforts to exclude consideration of the affected subject's knowledge from his account, it seems that a person can be intuitively lucky or unlucky precisely because of what they do not know. To take a cartoonish example, imagine that a safe falls off of a rooftop as you are walking down the street and lands directly in your path. You certainly seem lucky that you avoided getting hit by the falling safe. However, if you knew that the safe would fall, it seems like you would not be lucky to avoid it. The luck involved seems to depend precisely on the fact that you do not know that the safe is going to fall into your path. Pritchard's account of luck in terms of objectively lucky events does not seem to allow for this kind of subject-sensitivity, unless we treat the subject not knowing that the safe will fall as one of the relevant initial conditions of the event. However, this does not seem compatible with Pritchard's

[95] Recently, E.J. Coffman has developed his own version of a modal account of luck that is distinctly sensitive to this consideration. See Coffman, E. J. *Luck: Its Nature and Significance for Human Knowledge and Agency.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

claims about events having objectively lucky or non-lucky status, according to the features of nearby possible worlds, or his direct response to the secret benefactor case. However, I think that the stronger version of a modal account will be one where the subject's epistemic state can be a relevant initial condition. After all, the space of nearby possible worlds where you do not know about the falling safe seems populated with many worlds where you do get hit by the safe and many where you avoid it. However, if we do not keep this fixed, it seems that the nearby worlds where you do not get hit by the safe (because of the inclusion of those where you are aware of it falling) will grossly outnumber those where you do get hit by the safe.

Next, I want to consider a more targeted criticism levied by Jennifer Lackey in the following example:

> Buried treasure: Sophie, knowing that she had very little time left to live, wanted to bury a chest filled with all of her earthly treasures on the island she inhabited. As she walked around trying to determine the best site for proper burial, her central criteria were, first, that a suitable location must be on the northwest corner of the island—where she had spent many of her fondest moments in life—and, second, that it had to be a spot where rose bushes could flourish—since these were her favorite flowers. As it happens, there was only one particular patch of land on the northwest corner of the island where the soil was rich enough for roses to thrive. Sophie, being excellent at detecting such soil, immediately located this patch of land and buried her treasure, along with seeds for future roses to bloom, in the one and only spot that fulfilled her two criteria. One month later, Vincent, a distant neighbor of Sophie's, was driving in the northwest corner of the island—which was also his most beloved place to visit—and was looking for a place to plant a rose bush in memory of his mother who had died ten years earlier—since these were her favorite flowers. Being excellent at detecting the proper soil for rose bushes to thrive, he immediately located the same patch of land that Sophie had found one month earlier. As he began digging a hole for the bush, he was astonished to discover a buried treasure in the ground.[96]

This example is, in some ways, similar to the example of the secret benefactor; it is meant to threaten the necessity of Pritchard's conditions by showing how a paradigmatically lucky event, finding buried treasure, could, nonetheless, fail to satisfy L1. By adding the details about Sophie and Vincent's motivations and the soil quality, Lackey means to ensure that Vincent will find the

[96] Lackey, p.261.

buried treasure in most, if not all, nearby possible worlds. Similar to his response to the case of the secret benefactor, Pritchard suggests that, with those assurances in place, we would no longer think that this is an actual case of luck at all; "I take it that once we make clear that Vincent is guaranteed to find the treasure, however, and so form our judgment about whether the event is lucky while being fully aware of this fact, then the temptation to characterize the event as lucky disappears."[97]

Again, I do not share Pritchard's intuition that we would stop seeing the case as lucky, but, even setting aside that disagreement, I think we can give a stronger reply than the one that Pritchard offers. The initial conditions that seem to ensure that Vincent will find the treasure (concerning Sophie's motivations and the quality of the ground for planting roses) can plausibly be regarded as irrelevant because they are not relevant *to Vincent*. Even if he is ensured to find the treasure, Vincent seems lucky because all the factors that lead to him finding the treasure are unrelated to him. The stronger version of a modal account would not, I think, treat the facts about Sophie's motivations as relevant;[98] thus, the space of nearby possible worlds under consideration would include all those where Sophie's motivations were slightly different or the soil quality was different. Of those worlds, there does seem to be a wide class where Vincent fails to find the treasure. If the qualifier 'relevant' is meant to have any force in 'relevant initial conditions' from L1, I would think that this must be it.

[97] Pritchard 2015, p. 160.

[98] In fact, Lackey offers a way of constructing counterexamples along these lines that makes this lack of relevance explicit: "first, choose a paradigmatic instance of luck, such as winning a game show through a purely lucky guess, emerging unharmed from an otherwise fatal accident through no special assistance, etc. Second, construct a case in which, though both central aspects of the event are counterfactually robust, *there is no deliberate or otherwise relevant connection between them*." Lackey, p. 263, emphasis mine.

There is another interesting example to consider, presented by Wayne Riggs. However, unlike the example of Lackey's buried treasure, this example is meant to challenge the sufficiency, rather than the necessity, of Pritchard's conditions:

> Smarty the valedictorian: Smarty is the valedictorian of her high school class who is about to take her computer delivered college entrance exams. Despite her formidable intelligence, she decides to prepare for the upcoming exam by studying diligently and taking many practice exams. The night before the exam, she gets a good night's sleep, and awakens fresh, sharp, and ready to excel. She takes the exam and scores very highly. Unbeknownst to Smarty, however, a fiendishly clever hacker with debilitating test anxiety had decided prior to the exam to wreak vengeance on all the clever students about to take it. Driven mad by his inability to get into a good college because of his poor test scores, he has vowed that all those smarty-pants test-takers will suffer just as he has had to suffer. He compiles a list of all the high school valedictorians for that year, and hacks into the exam program. For the valedictorians, he replaces the usual questions with questions from an advanced college physics exam. As it happens, he accidentally skips Smarty's name on the list (despite being very careful not to miss anybody), and so she gets the usual questions. As a result, she is the only valedictorian who did well on the exam.[99]

For this to be a direct challenge to the sufficiency of Pritchard's conditions, we would want to say that Smarty is, intuitively, non-lucky in this case. However, Riggs himself acknowledges that the supposed non-luckiness of this case is not intuitively clear: "was Smarty's high score on the exam a matter of luck? For my own part, I find that I am pulled in two directions here. I am willing to say that Smarty is lucky that her questions were not changed, but that seems to me not to amount to saying that she is lucky to have done well on the exam."[100] If we remember Pritchard's caution about carefully identifying the event in question, it seems that he has the tools to do justice to Riggs's dual intuition. The event of Smarty's questions not being changed is separate from the event of her performing well on the exam. If we consider *all* the possible worlds where the hacker sabotages the valedictorians, then there are many nearby worlds where

[99] Riggs, Wayne. "Luck, Knowledge and Control." *Epistemic Value*. Eds. A. Haddock, A. Millar, and D. H. Pritchard. Oxford University Press, 2009a, pp. 211-212.

[100] ibid, p. 8.

Smarty's exam is sabotaged. If we consider *all* the possible worlds where Smarty prepares as described, then, intuitively, the nearby worlds where she does well on the exam vastly outnumber those where she does poorly.

The potential difficulty for Pritchard's account comes from considering a space of possible worlds where Smarty has prepared for the exam as described *and* the hacker has sabotaged the valedictorians' exams. However, I do not think this is a fair way of characterizing the modal account; L1 was presented in terms of a *wide class* of the *nearest* possible worlds. These terms are deliberately vague, I think, in order to mirror our intuitive judgments in cases like Smarty the valedictorian. It also seems too demanding to ask that the theory make a decisive judgment on whether or not Smarty is, all-things-considered, lucky to have done well on the exam. It seems better that the theory stops at the same level as pre-reflective intuitions, here; Smarty is not lucky that she performed well on the exam, although she is lucky that the hacker did not sabotage her exam; by Pritchard's lights, these should be understood as distinct events that deserve distinct evaluations.

I believe that these examples have shown how Pritchard's modal account (or a modified version of it) is able to describe a wide range of difficult cases of luck in terms of the modal closeness of possible worlds where the putatively lucky events do not occur. It also has the advantage of beginning to account for attitudes and practices surrounding luck in terms of sensitivity to events where things could, in some sense, have *very easily* been otherwise. For example, Pritchard describes the attractiveness of lotteries as being explained by the fact that the world where you do win the lottery is extremely similar to the actual world. We could develop this further by trying to justify luck attitudes in light of how easily things could have gone differently for the affected subject.

However, despite the promise of developing an account along these lines, it seems that we run into one of two difficulties, depending on how we understand the setting of 'relevant initial conditions' for an event. Pritchard is focused on distinguishing events as objectively lucky apart from what causes us to think of them as lucky: "Remember that our interest is in what makes an event lucky, not merely on what prompts subjects to judge that an event is lucky."[101] So, his treatment of the examples just offered, Rescher's secret benefactor and Lackey's buried treasure, seems to establish the relevance of initial conditions for an event according to a kind of causal or explanatory relevance. Thus, when we consider a lottery, we should exclude those worlds where the lottery has been fixed. However, this leads to strangely counter intuitive evaluations of examples like the secret benefactor. Pritchard seems happy to bite the bullet in these cases.

Alternatively, we could follow my suggestion and develop the modal account where the idea of 'relevant initial conditions' does more work. Although this can lead to more intuitive evaluations of the examples presented in this section, I think this leads to the same problem that was observed with the low probability account; it seems to cut at the wrong level. Why am I justified in treating one case (such as an when a novice beats an expert marksman) as lucky, when I am, intuitively, not so justified in another case (such as Smarty performing well on her exam) when, in both cases, we can carefully describe the initial conditions to satisfyL1? The answer would have to start by carefully specifying the initial conditions for those events that our judgments *should* focus on. However, a way of distinguishing between those different features seems to be exactly what the theory is supposed to provide.

This version of the modal account offers the conceptual machinery to describe any intuitively lucky event in terms of the modal closeness of worlds where it does not occur, if we

[101] Pritchard, 2015, p. 161.

carefully choose the right initial conditions to establish the relevant space of possible worlds; in a sense, this is somewhat satisfying as a necessary condition (if an event is lucky, it is describable in these terms) and somewhat satisfying as a condition that is jointly sufficient with L2 (any event that can be described this way is, in this sense, lucky) if we are concerned, as Pritchard is, in specifying a class of objectively lucky events. However, if we are also concerned, as I am, in accounting for the practices and attitudes surrounding the everyday use of the concept 'luck' then this account falls short. While describing all cases of luck in modal terms might be useful for specific theoretical projects, it does not capture what it is about cases of luck that motivates, and in some sense justifies, the luck attitudes we adopt in light of them. On either understanding of how to establish the relevant initial conditions for a putatively lucky event, the modal account is lacking a way of spelling out the connection between the interested person and the event, which seems needed if we are going to justify the general practice of adopting modified attitudes in response to luck.

4. Riggs's Developed Lack of Control Account

Next, I want to address a developed account of luck that, in contrast to Pritchard's modal account, focuses primarily on the connection between the affected subject and a putatively lucky event. This account is proposed by Wayne Riggs, and is one of the most developed accounts of luck based on the idea of control. Riggs begins by articulating the relevant sense of control:

> One has control over some happening to the extent that the happening is properly considered something the agent has *done*. As I have already indicated, this imposes two separable requirements. First, the event has to be the product of the agent's powers, abilities or skills. Second, the event has to be, at least in some attenuated sense, something the agent *meant* to do. This second requirement does not demand an actual conscious intention on the part of the agent, but it does mean that a goal or desire or intention must be guiding the exercise of one's powers, abilities or skills that brings about the event in question.[102]

[102] Riggs, Wayne. "Luck, Knowledge and Control." *Epistemic Value*. Eds. A. Haddock, A. Millar, and D. H. Pritchard. Oxford University Press, 2009a, p. 217, emphasis his.

In his take on the relevant version of control, we can see aspects of the idea of intentionality raised in my discussion of luck and accidents. Riggs's version of control is importantly distinct from Zimmerman's notion of restricted control; for Riggs, control seems to require some causal contribution from the agent, while, for Zimmerman, restricted control seems to require that the event merely depends on the agent for its happening. For Zimmerman, it seems that we can be in control of events that we merely let happen so long as we have the ability to choose not to let them happen, while Riggs's account will require that we, in some sense, *produce* (or help to produce) the event.

However, Riggs's understanding of control also allows for partial causal contribution to count as (some degree) of control. Riggs uses the language of attributably to characterize his account: "To say that something is due to luck *just is* to say that it is not attributable to whomever is assumed to be the beneficiary (or victim) of said luck."[103] He relies on this notion of attributably to develop his credit theory of knowledge,[104] and is very careful to distinguish credit-worthiness from praise-worthiness. In his discussion of the credit theory of knowledge, he writes:

> It may well be true that S deserves little praise for having come to know that p, but it does not follow from that that coming to know p is not something that is attributable to S as a cognitive agent. In an important sense, it is something that S has done, whether or not it is worthy of praise.[105]

From this, we can infer that, for Riggs, an agent can be said to be in control of an event even if they do not do so much to cause it that they deserve praise (assuming the event is positive) or

[103] Riggs, Wayne. "Two Problems of Easy Credit." *Synthese*. 169 (2009b), p. 203, emphasis his.

[104] ibid. He writes: "S knows that p only if S's holding the true belief that p is attributable to her as a cognitive agent."

[105] ibid, p. 208.

blame (assuming the event is negative). He writes: "It would be silly to require that someone do more than was necessary to bring about some end in order for it to be attributable to them that they did so."[106] For example, a member of a winning sports team can be attributed with winning the game even if their contribution was not so great that they had the ability to prevent their team from winning due the overwhelming influence of their teammates' contributions. This would not meet Zimmerman's notion of restricted control.

Using this understanding of control, Riggs offers the following definition:

"E is lucky for S iff
(a) E is (too far) out of S's control, and
(b) S did not successfully exploit E for some purpose, and
(c) E is significant to S (or would be significant, were S to be availed of the relevant facts)."[107]

Similar to Pritchard, Riggs is offering a continuum view of luck, with a certain amount of (I think desirable) vagueness. How much is needed to satisfy condition (a)? Riggs writes: "What we have to do to be responsible for some outcome is: enough. There is not some stable threshold of effort or determination or skill that must be superseded on my part before it is reasonable to say that I did such-and-such."[108] It is odd that Riggs does not say more on what this unstable threshold depends on, although we will be able to draw some inferences from his response to certain counterexamples levied against his account.

Riggs adds the second condition (b) to account for a particular kind of counterexample that has often been presented to challenge the sufficiency of lack of control as a rough description of luck. The objection is that there are events, such as the sun's rising each morning,

[106] ibid, p. 215.

[107] Riggs, 2009a, p.224.

[108] Riggs, 2009b, p. 215. Riggs introduces the potentially problematic language of responsibility here, but, as this is the only sentence where he invokes the concept, I think it better to read his idea of 'being responsible for an outcome' as 'that outcome being attributable to you (as something you have done).'

that are clearly out of any person's control, and yet, due (somehow) to their regularity and predictability, cannot reasonably be considered lucky. He discusses the following, more nuanced case to respond:

> Gentleman adventurers: Consider two gentlemen adventurers, Indiana Jones and New Jersey Smith. Suppose that Jones and Smith are adventuring in an exotic locale filled with local tribes that engage in some unfamiliar customs. These tribes all worship the sun as a god, and see an eclipse as a sign of the sun god's disfavor with whatever they are doing at that moment. Jones and Smith are captured by some of these tribe members, but then are set free when a solar eclipse happens moments after their capture. Jones has consulted his almanac before starting the expedition and planned in such a way that, if they were captured, the eclipse would present an opportunity for them to escape. Smith has not done any such planning, and is completely surprised by the eclipse. [109]

Intuitively, Smith is lucky in a way that Jones is not. However, this is not captured by Riggs's first condition alone. After all, the eclipse is not in Jones's or Smith's control; it cannot be properly described as something that either of them has done. Further, it is not merely his knowing that the eclipse would occur that makes Smith lucky and Jones not; if Smith knew that the eclipse would occur but did not plan to use that knowledge to free himself from the local tribe members, we should still think that Smith is lucky is a way that Jones is not. According to Riggs, it is specifically because Jones exploited his knowledge; he took the fact that the eclipse would occur "into account and planned a course of action that assumed [it] would occur."[110]

The idea of exploitation in criterion (b) is not fully defined by Riggs: "there is obviously a lot of work that needs to be done in getting clearer on what counts as 'exploiting' something in this context. For now, I will have to rely on an intuitive understanding gained from the

[109] My presentation of this case is an abbreviated version of Riggs's much lengthier treatment. See Riggs, 2009a, pp. 219-222 for his full description and discussion of the case. Also, see the cases of the accidental and the savvy slayer in Riggs, Wayne. "Luck, Knowledge, and 'Mere' Coincidence." *The Philosophy of Luck.* Ed. Duncan Pritchard and Lee John Wittington. Wiley Blackwell, 2015. 177-189, for a similar example.

[110] Riggs, 2009a, p. 222.

foregoing examples."[111] However, in order to defend himself against the charge of answering counterexamples with ad hoc additions to his theory, Riggs explains the connection between control and exploitation in the following way:

> What seems to distinguish Jones from Smith, and makes Smith lucky to be alive but not Jones, is not that Jones knew about the eclipse and whatnot, but that he exploited those facts to his own advantage. That is to say, he took them into account and planned a course of action that assumed that those things would occur. And the outcome that resulted, his survival, was a consequence of his having taken account of and exploited those facts. Thus, he was in control of his own destiny, even though he was not in control of every event that played an important role in that destiny.[112]

Thus, Riggs continues to place lack of control at the center of his account; condition (a) covers lack of control over the event, while condition (b) covers lack of control over one's destiny. Jones's survival is, in this sense, under his control, even though he lacked control over an important event that led to his survival.

Pritchard offers an expected criticism of Riggs's treatment of the Gentleman adventurers based in his interest in identifying so-called objectively lucky events. He writes:

> That Riggs is here talking about an event that is lucky for one agent but not for another should give us pause for further reflection. For while it is undeniable that the event will *seem* lucky to Smith, since he was lacking crucial information about this event, I have already noted that we should not conclude from the mere fact that an event *seems lucky to a certain individual* that therefore it is lucky.[113]

Here, I think that we can agree with Pritchard that it is not enough that an event merely seems lucky to an individual for the event to actually be lucky. However, Pritchard seems to miss the important features of the case Riggs has presented; Smith does not think that he is lucky because he misunderstands the inevitability of the eclipse happening as it did. Instead Smith (and, I think, most everyday judges) thinks that he is lucky in a way that Jones is not because he failed

[111] ibid, p. 223.

[112] ibid, p. 222.

[113] Pritchard, 2015, p. 162, emphasis mine.

to do anything to affect his own escape. Nothing Smith did contributed to his escaping in the way that Jones's careful planning and preparation did. I contend that Pritchard's interpretation of the case, that Smith only regards himself as lucky because he lacks certain information about how the event transpired (and that an external observer with full possession of the facts would not consider Smith lucky), is troublingly counterintuitive.

It is interesting to note at this point, that, however Riggs's idea of exploitation is cashed out, it will seem to require at least that the subject has real knowledge that the event is going to happen. Otherwise, (b) could easily be shown to not be a necessary condition for an event to be lucky in the following way. Assume that an optimistic lottery player has formed the unjustified belief that he will win the lottery, and therefore makes bets with everyone he can that he will win that lottery. It seems that, if the lottery player does win, he will have, in a sense, exploited the fact that he would win the lottery. Yet, he is clearly lucky to have won the lottery and those additional bets given the lack of justification for his belief that he would win. So, I argue, however the notion of exploitation is spelled out, it should include that the subject has actual knowledge of the event when he exploits it for some purpose. However, given Riggs's interest in offering a theory of luck in an effort to get clearer on a theory of knowledge, this implication should give us pause, as it threatens circularity if one's theory of knowledge is going to include an anti-luck condition.

So, let's think of Riggs's account as identifying lucky events in the following way: if we consider all events that are significant to a person, we can identify those that are lucky for that person by excluding those events that are (at least partially) produced by that person's intentional use of their powers, skills, and abilities, and all those events that the person has exploited, in the sense they have planned for them and used them to generate some advantage. There is a

considerable amount of intuitive appeal to this kind of account, and it does a fair job of explaining the connection between luck and achievement (lucky events are, in a way, just those events that cannot be construed as a person's personal accomplishments) and it even allows us to account for the motivation for and justification of adopting luck attitudes. We can compose a story about how we adopt normal reactive attitudes because we assume a sort of control (in the way that Riggs has described it) behind every person's gains and losses until we see evidence that such control is missing.

Riggs second condition is very helpful in answering some of the most common criticisms of less developed control based accounts, which lean on the idea that control criteria usually lead a counterintuitive proliferation of lucky events.[114] Riggs account also gives a very intuitive answer to the case of the secret benefactor; Tobias is lucky because nothing he does contributes to his receiving the money. A case like Lackey's buried treasure is less obvious; Riggs's account will have a little difficulty identifying exactly what event is out of Vincent's control. Digging up and acquiring the treasure is certainly something that Vincent has done. In order to understand Riggs's reading of this example, we need to remember the intentionality constraint folded into his understanding of control; Vincent is lucky because finding the treasure was not something that he meant to do. Vincent was guided by the intention to plant a rose bush in a suitable spot, not by an intention to unearth Sophie's treasure.

However, there are some difficulties for this account that are not covered by the addition of criterion (b). First, Riggs's control account seems to fail to capture cases where a person has the necessary control (by making the typical contribution to bring about the event), but nevertheless appear to be lucky due to other background factors. Consider the following example, offered by Jennifer Lackey:

[114] For example, see Lackey, pp. 258-261.

> Demolition worker: Ramona is a demolition worker, about to press a button that will blow up an old abandoned warehouse, thereby completing a project that she and her co-workers have been working on for several weeks. Unbeknownst to her, however, a mouse had chewed through the relevant wires in the construction office an hour earlier, severing the connection between the button and the explosives. But as Ramona is about to press the button, her co-worker hangs his jacket on a nail in the precise location of the severed wires, which radically deviates from his usual routine of hanging his clothes in the office closet. As it happens, the hanger on which the jacket is hanging is made of metal, and it enables the electrical current to pass through the damaged wires just as Ramona presses the button and demolishes the warehouse.[115]

What this kind of example is meant to show is that, even though a person can have the kind of control that Riggs describes, she can still be lucky (i.e., this example is meant to show that Riggs's first condition is not a necessary condition). In this case, Ramona seems to have control in Riggs's sense; Ramona meant to demolish the building, and the building's demolition was certainly (at least partially) the product of her power, abilities, and skills. In such a case, Riggs might respond in a way similar to his analysis of Smarty the valedictorian, by carefully identifying separate events.[116] Ramona lacked control over the mouse chewing through the wire, and she lacked control over her coworker's reconnecting the wire by hanging his jacket. She is unlucky and lucky, respectively, with regard to those two events.

Why not just stop at these two evaluations, as we did in the analysis of the case of Smarty the valedictorian through the lens of Pritchard's modal account? The additional difficulty Lackey's demolition worker poses for Riggs is that there is a third event that is separate of the two more clearly evaluated events. In the case of Smarty the valedictorian, we were able to say that Smarty was, ultimately, not lucky to do well on the exam even though she was lucky that the hacker did not sabotage her exam. In the case of the demolition worker, even if we say that Ramona is unlucky that the mouse bit through the wire and that Ramona is lucky that her

[115] Lackey, p. 258.

[116] See section 3 above, pp. 65-66.

coworker reconnected the wire by hanging his jacket, it is not clear how this contributes to an ultimate evaluation of the event of Ramona blowing up the building.

Lackey takes this be a serious counterexample to Riggs's account because, although condition (a) is satisfied, "by virtue of the fortuitous combination of events leading to Ramona's control over the explosion, that she succeeded in demolishing the warehouse is also clearly riddled with luck."[117] Lackey observes that it seems to be obvious that Ramona is lucky that she is in control of the demolition (rather, Ramona is lucky to gain control over the demolition) and that this make the demolition itself 'riddled with luck.' However, is it really so clear that the presence of luck leading up to the demolition must make the demolition itself lucky? What seems to happen here is that Riggs's account seems to allow for bad and good luck to, in a sense, 'cancel out.' How counterintuitive is this possibility? What is striking about Lackey's demolition worker case is that the bad luck of the mouse chewing through the wire is perfectly cancelled out by the good luck of Ramona's coworker reconnecting the wire by hanging his jacket. However, in some everyday use we do treat bad and good luck as weighing against each other. If we consider a lottery winner who ultimately is abandoned by her friends and falls in a life of excess and ruin due to her sudden wealth, we might comfortably say that, although she seemed lucky to win the lottery, at first, she was ultimately unlucky to win the lottery because all the bad consequences outweighed the good ones. While the view I want to endorse later will not be one on which luck can, in this sense, cancel out, at the very least, I do not think we can say that such a picture of luck is obviously wrong without further argument.

Riggs's control-based account of luck shares some virtues with Pritchard's modal account. Both accounts present luck as a continuum by including certain vague thresholds in the language of their definitions. I think that this kind of vagueness is a virtue if it mirrors everyday

[117] Lackey, pp. 258-259.

use and uncertainty about luck. Also like Pritchard, Riggs has a completely separate significance criterion, and would prefer to exclude it from his account.[118] Unlike Pritchard, Riggs's control-based account builds in subject-sensitivity at the ground floor, and this is very promising for explaining how luck would motivate and justify adopting modified attitudes to the subjects that benefit or suffer from it. In light of these virtues, I see the Riggs's account as a very interesting starting point for theorizing about luck. The account I develop in Chapter V is, in some ways, a spiritual successor and refinement of a proposal like Riggs's.

5. Rescher's Treatment

The final contemporary account of luck that I want to consider is presented by Nicholas Rescher. He offers one of the longer contemporary treatments of luck in *Luck: the Brilliant Randomness of Everyday Life.*[119] This account is importantly different from Pritchard and Rescher's in a couple ways. First, Rescher does not offer his treatment of luck for an explicit, more specific theoretical use. Pritchard's and Riggs's definitions were offered in the interest of cashing out their anti-luck epistemologies while the more gestural accounts given by Williams, Nagel, Statman, and Zimmerman were presented to illustrate specific problems surrounding moral luck. In this way, Rescher's interest in giving a very general account is much like my own. Second, unlike Pritchard's modal account and Riggs's control-based account, Rescher does not present a definitional list of conditions that are, theoretically, individually necessary and jointly sufficient for an event's being lucky. In light of this, some work needs to be done to isolate the particulars of Rescher's position and criticism of Rescher's account will rely less on targeted counterexamples.

[118] See Riggs, 2009a, p. 219, for Riggs's lengthy protest to including such a condition.

[119] Rescher, Nicholas. *Luck: The Brilliant Randomness of Everyday Life.* University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995.

Rescher broadly situates his idea of luck as one of three things that shape the "condition of people."[120] He describes 'fate' as covering the features of a person's condition that are so by nature, 'fortune' as covering the features of a person's condition that are so due to their own effort, and 'luck' as covering the features of a person's condition that are due to chance. More specifically, he claims that luck "is a matter of those goods and bads that befall us purely by chance, in a way that is unforeseen, unplanned for, and unexpected—at any rate by the agent herself."[121] Rescher has also described the unreliability of luck in a variety of ways, with the following three being some of the most direct:

1) "As far as the affected person is concerned, the outcome came about 'by accident.'"[122]
2) "There has to be something impredictable about luck." [123]
3) "Luck accordingly involves…an event that is…fortuitous (unexpected, chancy, unforeseeable)."[124]

Rescher's broad and varied treatment of luck has led to other writers[125] characterizing his view in a variety of ways according to their focus on different parts. The task at hand is to try to accommodate all these threads into a single understanding of luck.

[120] Rescher, Nicholas. "The Machinations of Luck." *The Philosophy of Luck.* Ed. Duncan Pritchard and Lee John Wittington. Wiley Blackwell, 2015. p. 169.

[121] ibid, p. 170.

[122] Rescher, 1995, p. 32.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid.

[125] For example, his view has been characterized as a 'value plus chance' account (by Riggs, 2009a, p.207 and Latus, Andrew. "Constitutive Luck." *Metaphilosophy,* 34.4 (2003):460-475), an 'accident plus chance' account (Pritchard, 2005, p. 195), and in terms of 'what can be rationally expected to occur' (Pritchard 2015, p.158).

Let's start by considering the idea that we can understand luck by appealing to the idea of accidents. As we saw in section 1, Rescher is far from the only theorist to describe luck in terms of accidents. However, as already noted, there are non-accidental events that are prima facie lucky. Seemingly simple cases like winning the lottery or a lucky shot do not seem to involve accidents. As Pritchard has argued, "it is a matter of luck (given the odds) that one wins the lottery, but it need not thereby be an *accident* that one wins (at least absent some further details about the scenario). If one deliberately bought the ticket in question and, say, one self-consciously chose the winning numbers, then it would be odd to refer to the resulting outcome as being accidental."[126] Similarly, if a novice dart player throws a dart at a bulls-eye deliberately, and aims for the center, it may be a matter of luck that he or she actually hits the center (given his or her lack of skill and consequent tendency to miss targets by at least some small amount). Yet, it would be odd to describe this as an accident – the throw turned out exactly as the thrower intended.

Still, thinking in terms of accidents is informative; it seems that being brought about accidentally may be sufficient for an event being lucky if the significance condition is also met. In other words, it seems lucky if an accident results in a significant gain for me. However, it seems that there can be accidents that result in significant losses for me that are not unlucky. For example, if I am negligent or reckless while driving a car I may accidentally crash into a tree, but in virtue of my recklessness and negligence, I am not unlucky to crash into the tree.

The second way that Rescher characterizes luck is in terms of impredictability. For Rescher, there are two (non-exclusive) kinds of impredictability: chance impredictability and ignorance impredictability. An event may be impredictable because it involves the outcome of

[126] Pritchard, 2005, p. 126

an actually stochastic[127] process, or it can be impredictable because it proceeds from a set of known conditions in such a way that a reasonable person could not infer the consequence (due to chaos,[128] unknown choices made by others, or a simple lack of relevant information). Chance impredictability relies on the reality of indeterminism while ignorance impredictability relies on inadequate information or cognitive limitations. So, there are two ways that ignorance impredictabilty presents itself: 1) the person interested in the event may not have access to a piece of information needed to predict the event (for example, I might inherit a fortune when my uncle passes away, but I was not aware that I was named his benefactor), or 2) the person interested in the event may be unable to predict the event because of cognitive or computational limitations. However, if Rescher is wrong to assume that there are actual metaphysically indeterminate events, the distinction would dissolve and the apparently indeterminate events will still be captured under ignorance impredictability instead: "With luck pure chance is involved. No doubt nothing whatever is unplanned by an unforeseeable to a God who tracks more than the flight of every sparrow. But there is much that lies outside the ken of us imperfect and ignorant humans."[129]

But how well does the notion of impredictability really line up with the notion of luck? Rescher presents impredictability as a necessary condition of an event's luckiness: "The positive and negative events one can (appropriately) foresee are not matters of luck."[130] The qualifier of

[127] For Rescher, chance impredictability requires seeing the world as undetermined, such that "one and the same (literally identical) set of initial conditions (i.e., one selfsame circumstantial state of affairs) can eventuate in different results" (Rescher, 1995, p. 47, emphasis removed). See Rescher, 1995, pp. 44-45 for his argument against determinism. I will make no similar commitment to indeterminism.

[128] Rescher defines chaos as follows: "a process is chaotic if minutely different, observationally indistinguishable initial conditions can eventuate in different results, irrespective of how sophisticatedly we make the observations (short of unrealizable idealizations)" Rescher, 1995, p. 47, emphasis removed.

[129] Rescher, 2015, p. 170.

[130] Rescher, 1995, p. 41. Throughout Rescher's account 'predict,' 'foresee,' and 'expect' are used interchangeably.

'appropriately' will do considerable work and is included to capture cases where someone has a baseless expectation that is nevertheless satisfied.[131] Also, it is important to note that Rescher is thinking in terms of what the subject *can* expect, not what the subject actually does (as a matter of fact) expect. So, Rescher will say that winning a fair lottery is impredictable (and lucky), even if the winner expected to win beforehand. It is inappropriate to expect to win a fair lottery. Rescher goes on to claim that an event is lucky so long as it is impredictable *when it happens*: "If yesterday I won the raffle whose prize I will collect tomorrow, then I am of course very lucky. That event is lucky for me because it was unforeseeable *at the time*, though not, of course, thereafter."[132] One example that Rescher presents as a "particularly striking form of good luck"[133] is the case of the secret benefactor, already discussed in my treatment of Pritchard's modal account:

> a happy or unhappy development can be a matter of luck from the recipient's point of view even if its eventuation is the result of a deliberate contrivance by others. (Your secret benefactor's sending you that big check represents a stroke of good luck for you even if it is something that he has been planning for years). Thus even if someone else–different from the person affected–is able to predict that unexpected development, the eventuation at issue may still be lucky for those who are involved.[134]

On Recher's account, even though one does not have the money yet, the gain counts as unforeseen (and unforeseeable) because it could not be appropriately foreseen at the relevant time (in this case, the relevant time would seemingly be any point prior to finding out about the death of the relative). Rescher is suggesting that an important part of what make this a lucky inheritance is that it takes the beneficiary by surprise. But, should we deny that a person who stands to inherit a fortune from their parents, even knowing that this will happen at some point

[131] Recall the optimistic lottery player described on p. 73.

[132] Rescher, 1995, p. 217, ft 1, emphasis added.

[133] ibid, p.71.

[134] ibid, p. 35.

(perhaps due to living with a legal system of primogeniture), is not lucky? It seems to me that both Rescher and Pritchard get something wrong in cases like these. Intuitively, it seems like the subject is lucky whether or not he knows about the upcoming windfall. What really seems to matter is that the subject has done nothing to earn the money. This is an enduring problem with Rescher's treatment; there seem to be predictable events that are nevertheless intuitively lucky. The case of the secret benefactor seems to be one, and we can easily generate more by simply positing an advantage for the concerned subject that is largely out of proportion to the work the subject has done to secure it.

Rescher also offers a formula for measuring luck:

$$\lambda\,(E) = \Delta\,(E) \times [1\text{-pr}(E)] = \Delta\,(E) \times \text{pr}(\text{not-}E)$$[135]

Let E represent some event, let $\Delta\,(E)$ represent the significance of that outcome for the relevant agent (positive values when the event is good for the agent and negative values when the event is bad for the agent), and let pr(E) represent the probability of E's occurring. The λ measure is a measure of the degree of luck, with positive values being lucky and negative values being unlucky.

Some have taken this formula as a reason for constructing Rescher's view in terms of chance. From Andrew Latus:

> As the formula indicates, Rescher views luck as a property of events that varies inversely with the likelihood of the event and proportionally to the value of the event (so long as we leave aside the issue of whether the value is positive or negative). This seems plausible as an initial account of luck. How lucky an event is does seem to be tied to the chance of the event occurring. A person is luckier to win a lottery when her chance is one in a million than she is when her chance is one in a thousand. So, too, it seems the degree of luck in any given occurrence is tied to the value of that occurrence. A person is luckier to win a million dollars than a thousand. Finally, this account gives us a plausible way of saying when an event is good luck and when it is bad luck. That depends on whether the value of the event is positive or negative. Nonetheless, there are plenty of things that need clarifying here. What sort of chance are we talking about: objective or

[135] ibid, p. 211.

> subjective? What sets the value of the event: what you think of it, what you ought to think of it, or some objective measure of its value? Still, the view seems worthy of further consideration.[136]

However, given Rescher's focus on impredictabilty, I do not think that the relevant notion of chance is completely unspecified; the most plausible reading seems to be that the probability in question is the subjective probability of the events occurring from the concerned subject's epistemic position. In some sense, the relevant probability is determined by what the subject rationally ought to believe the probability is, given the information they have access to.[137]

Regardless of how the probability involved for Rescher's account of measuring luck is to be understood, however, he is careful to distinguish the condition of impredictability from an account based on low probability. He proposes that the survivor of a round of Russian Roulette "was lucky—even though only one of the six chambers of his revolver was loaded and the probabilities favored survival. For it was only 'by chance' that things turned out well."[138] So, to take the formula that he offers for measuring luck seriously, luck merely requires that the chance of the event be neither zero nor one; any other probability can ground luck given the right kind of significance for the subject. While I agree with Rescher's intuition in this case, this is not an uncontroversial position. For example, E. J. Coffman offers an error theory of such intuitions,[139] claiming a distinction between luck and fortune based precisely on the probabilities involved.

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[136] Latus, Andrew. "Constitutive Luck." *Metaphilosophy*, 34.4 (2003), p. 465.

[137] This rather vague rendering will suffice for my purposes, as I am more interested in answering the charge that Rescher gives us no way of cashing out the relevant notion of chance than in actually providing the detailed account of chance, here. For a very promising direction, consider the following condition on luck offered by Asbjørn Steglich-Petersen in "Luck as an Epistemic Notion." *Synthese*. 176 (2010): "*S* is lucky with respect to E at *t* only if, given the evidence available to *S* just before *t*, there was a large chance that E would not occur at *t*."

[138] Rescher, 1995, p. 25.

[139] Coffman, E. J. "Thinking About Luck." *Synthese*, 158.3 (2007), p. 392.

So, my evaluation of Rescher's treatment of luck is going to focus on whether or not we can reasonably draw the various threads of his discussion into a single account. In summary, Rescher has suggested that: 1) luck is distinct from fate and fortune; luck arises from pure chance, not from effort or nature, 2) luck is sensitive to the subject's epistemic position, but there is a distinction between what the subject actually believes and what the subject ought to believe, 3) chance should be understood in terms of impredictability; that is, an event is a matter of chance to the extent that the affected subject was not in a position to predict it, and 4) we can measure luck according to how unlikely it was (from the subject's epistemic position) and how significant it was for the affected subject. So, keeping in mind Rescher's $\lambda(E) = \Delta(E) \times [1 - pr(E)]$ measure of the luckiness of an event, we can fairly see 1 as a restriction that $pr(E)$ is neither zero nor one, and 2 and 3 as an explanation of subjective epistemic position from which we should establihs the probability of the event. Finally, 4 completes the view as a continuum picture (similar to Rescher and Riggs) where we have a desirable vagueness in just how high the measure needs to be before we would classify an event as lucky; for high significance and low probailities the judgment is quite clear while for low levels of significance and higher probailities our judgments get less clear.

The main deficiency I see in Rescher's account, however, depends on the larger picture he sets up, rather than the specifics of his implicit definition. He proposes a triad of fate, fortune, and luck, by assumption, which seems to rule out too much from an account of luck. While what Rescher describes as fortune results from a person's efforts and skills and lies clearly outside the domain of luck, fate, those matters that he describes as being due to the subject by nature, are often treated very similar to cases of chance-based luck. Do we think that winning a great fortune from a literal physical lottery is so different from receiving the same fortune through the

natural lottery of being born into a family with great wealth you will stand to inherit? In short, it is difficult for me to see any rationale for holding different attitudes toward advantages that are due to (Rescher's version of) chance than toward those that are due to nature. In either case, it seems like my attitude is going to primarily be sensitive to what the subject has done to earn their advantage, and not to Rescher's version of chanciness.

6. Conclusion

Despite some fundamental differences in motivation and purpose, the commonalities between the theories just discussed are very instructive for developing my own account of luck. First, every account seems to allow for a similar kind of vagueness; however luck is measured (in terms of modal closeness, degree of control, or as a function of the stakes and probability), there seems to be a gray area where it is not clear whether or not the case is question is really lucky or non-lucky. As Pritchard writes, "we shouldn't expect anything more detailed, in that we shouldn't require a theory to be any more precise than the phenomena about which we are theorizing."[140] This continuum picture of luck is very attractive as it accounts for the gray area intuitions about very low levels of luck as well as the intuitive idea that cases of luck can be measured and compared in degree.

In developing this continuum picture, however, there appears to be at least two ways that an account of luck should be subject-sensitive. First, we want to allow that certain situations are lucky for some but not for others due to their epistemic position or the way that they've contributed to bringing the situation about; this was illustrated with Riggs's case of the Gentleman adventurers. Second, there seems to be a need for sensitivity to how and whether a situation is significant for a subject. Something can be lucky for one subject but not another

[140] Pritchard, 2015, p. 148.

because it matters to the first and does not make a difference to the second. These two sensitivities align nicely with the core ideas of luck I introduced in Chapter I.

Another common trend in the theories discussed is a focus on luck as a feature of events; however, I think leads to a few tensions that a different focus could improve on. First, although every theorist was clear about the need to carefully specify the event in question (for example, pulling apart the event of Smarty's doing well on the exam from Smarty's name being missed by the saboteur), there is a sense in which events might not be fine-grained enough to capture the complexity of how we would want to think about luck in complicated cases. We might not want to render a summative judgment of the luckiness of an entire event (such as Smarty the valedictorian or Lackey's demolition worker) when there are aspects of the event that are distinctly lucky (such as Smarty's test not being sabotaged) and aspects that are distinctly non-lucky (such as Smarty's answering correctly due to her intelligence and preparation).

Additionally, the focus on events seems to have led theorists like Pritchard and Riggs to abandon the significance criterion, or, at least, to give it a subordinate position in their treatment of luck. Pritchard is explicitly searching for objectively lucky events while Riggs only begrudgingly allows it into his account. As Riggs writes:

> The two conditions, [lack of control] and significance, seem unrelated except insofar as our intuitions about what is 'lucky' force them to coincide. There is a strong nagging suspicion that if we just got the other condition right, the solution to the significance problem would simply fall out of it. Otherwise, why would two otherwise apparently unrelated conditions be wedded in such a fundamental and ubiquitous notion as luck?[141]

I agree with Riggs's concern here; however, I do not agree with Pritchard that we can therefore do away with the significance criterion and capture what is important about luck only in terms of the objectively lucky event. I will address that approach in greater detail in Chapter IV. Instead, I have developed my theory to take on significance at the ground floor and I will show how

[141] Riggs, 2015, p. 182.

significance and unreliability intertwine in the advantage-based account I present in Chapter V. In this spirit, my next chapter focuses on unpacking the relevant idea of significance, arguing for greater consideration than it has traditionally received from those theorizing about luck.

Chapter III: The Significance of Significance

1. Introduction

In recent philosophical discussions about luck, the significance criterion has taken a back seat to a variety of characterizations of the unreliability criterion. While luck theorists often mention significance in their accounts, they tend not to offer a very detailed analysis of significance. Some have gone so far as to suggest that tying significance to luck is an ad hoc addition that is not needed for the strictest accounts of luck. From Wayne Riggs:

> There are all kinds of events that... seem not to be a matter of luck because they do not impinge on my life in any way—the movements of the stars in a distant galaxy, for example. The response I'd like to make here is to bite the bullet and insist that the intuitions give way to the theory in this case. There is a sense of "luck" that is entwined with our concept of "fortune," as in one's fate, or what befalls one in life. It is the pressure of this sense of luck that makes us uneasy calling something that is completely irrelevant to our fortunes a matter of luck. Yet this sense of luck is completely separable from the sense of luck I am trying to get clear on.... The sell-out alternative, then, is to acknowledge the need for something like Pritchard's principle (L2).[142]

Recall the condition that Riggs has in mind, Pritchard's L2: "If an event is lucky, then it is an event that is significant to the subject concerned (or would be significant, were the subject to be availed of the relevant facts)."[143] In more recent work, Pritchard has given up this condition: "I have now come to the conclusion that the very idea of adding a significance condition to the modal account of luck is wrongheaded."[144]

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[142] Riggs, Wayne. "Luck, Knowledge and Control." *Epistemic Value*. Eds. A. Haddock, A. Millar, and D. H. Pritchard. Oxford University Press, 2009a. p. 219.

[143] Pritchard, Duncan. *Epistemic Luck*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005, p. 132.

[144] Pritchard, Duncan. "The Modal Account of Luck." *The Philosophy of Luck.* Ed. Duncan Pritchard and Lee John Wittington. Wiley Blackwell, 2015. p. 153.

In contrast to this trend, I argue that the significance criterion deserves a much more detailed and careful treatment, and I will give it a prominent place in my own account.

In his earlier work, Pritchard presents some examples to show the force of L2, such as the example of a spontaneous landslide that does not affect any person or any person's property and is therefore neither lucky nor unlucky. Pritchard also acknowledges that we cannot base significance on what the concerned subject actually believes; to use his example,[145] if someone narrowly avoids getting hit by a thunderbolt, they are actually lucky even if they are unaware of the near miss.

Taken at face value, L2 identifies a significant event or state of affairs with what the concerned subject does or *would* consider significant. However, this account is troubling; as we will see in my treatment of some instructive examples, I believe we should be more interested in what the subject *ought* to find significant (that is, what is actually significant for the subject), regardless of what they would, as a matter of fact, believe was significant. As we will see in the next section, there are some examples where the concerned subject, even given access to all the relevant information, is not the appropriate judge of significance. In general, when making a second or third person luck attribution (such as 'You are lucky' or 'He was lucky'), there is a claim that the case is, in a sense, *actually* significant for the affected subject, apart from the affected subject's beliefs. I might (rightly) claim that my friend is lucky to win a hand of poker, even if my friend is indifferent to the outcome of the game.

Rescher excludes any extended discussion of the significance criterion, but his various characterizations may be instructive. At times, he uses the same bare significance language as Pritchard, but more often he adds small qualifications: "For an outcome to involve luck, two things are required: (1) that it be *significant* -- that we have a stake in it in that it makes a

[145] See Pritchard, 2005, p. 133.

difference, that it matters to us one way or the other, and (2) that it be *fortuitous* and involve the element of unforeseeability, unpredictability, or chance."[146] Here, it is not clear how we are supposed to understand his idea of significance, but it sounds similar to what Pritchard has in mind. 'What matters to us' clearly overlaps with 'what we do, or would, consider significant,' but it might also be a way of appealing to what is important to people, in general, or what is important to people collectively.

In other places, Rescher's characterizations of luck suggest a different interpretation of the significance criterion: "Luck accordingly involves three things: (1) a beneficiary or maleficiary, (2) a state of affairs that is benign (positive) or malign (negative) from the standpoint of the interests of the affected individual, and that, moreover, (3) is fortuitous (unexpected, chancy, unforeseeable)."[147] Here, Rescher identifies the interests of the affected individual as the relevant determinant of significance. This diverges from Pritchard's description at least as far as a person's actual interests might not coincide with the interests that they do or would recognize themselves. On occasion, Rescher will also characterize significance in terms of a person's well-being,[148] which again may separate what the affected subject does or would believe is significant to her from what is actually significant to her.

There are other accounts that separate the significance of an event from the concerned subject's perception of that event, similar to Rescher. For example, Daniel Statman writes, "Good luck occurs when something good happens to a subject P, its occurrence being beyond P's control. Similarly, bad luck occurs when something bad happens to a subject P, its occurrence

[146] Rescher, Nicholas. *Luck: The Brilliant Randomness of Everyday Life.* University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995, p. 64, emphasis his.

[147] ibid, p.32.

[148] ibid: "A person is not ordinarily lucky to encounter pigeons in the park or to see a cloud floating overhead, since such things do not normally affect one's well-being."

being beyond his control."[149] This seems to anchor significance to something other than the concerned subject's beliefs. Andrew Latus provides an instructive example: "We sometimes speak of people as lucky even though they would *deny* they are lucky. Someone who is miserable because of the ending of a destructive romantic relationship may well be described as not knowing how lucky he is."[150] Perhaps this person would consider himself lucky if he were 'availed of the relevant facts,' to use Pritchard's language, but, as we will see in the next section, there are other examples more difficult for Pritchard's characterization of significance.

My aim in this chapter is two-fold. First, I aim to show that the significance involved in luck is an interesting and complicated concept, as deserving of a detailed account as the unreliability criterion that has played the central role in many accounts of luck. Second, I aim to improve on accounts of significance (such as Pritchard's L2) that define significance in terms of the affected subject's (actual or potential) beliefs. In order to do this, I will start by introducing some complicated examples that both show a need for a nuanced account of the significance involved and show how luck might depend on a version of significance that does not depend on the affected subject's beliefs. Next, I will discuss how accounting for significance may be limited by our other ethical and meta-ethical commitments and that it is desirable to have a certain amount of ethical and meta-ethical flexibility in an account of luck. I will present my approach, which involves a division between impersonal and personal luck; roughly, a division between significance that applies generally to all persons and significance that is anchored to individuals' idiosyncratic interests. Finally, I will return to the leading, complicated examples to show how my approach allows for a fuller account of the significance involved.

[149] Statman, Daniel. "Moral and Epistemic Luck." *Ratio*. 4.2 (1991), p. 146.

[150] Latus, Andrew. "Constitutive Luck." *Metaphilosophy*, 34.4 (2003), p.470, ft. 27, emphasis his.

2. Leading Examples

In this section, I will discuss a group of interesting examples. The purpose of this is 1) to show that significance is a complicated feature of luck that deserves close attention, and 2) to show how we might find sparse treatments of the significance criterion, such as Pritchard's L2, unsatisfying. Let's consider:

1. Unwilling Lottery Winner: Due to certain religious, moral, or philosophical commitments,[151] Ursula is opposed to possessing a large amount of money. For some reason, she is entered into a fair lottery with a substantial monetary prize, and she wins. Because of these commitments, she is at best indifferent to winning this money, and at worst bothered that she now has to dispose of it. She considers herself unlucky.

2. Wealthy Gambler: Wallace is a multi-billionaire, who does not consider a gain or loss of $50 to make any difference to him, whatsoever. Wallace bets $50 on the roll of a six-sided die. The terms of the bet are that Wallace will win unless the die roll comes up as a six, leaving him to win on any roll from one to five. When the die is rolled, it does in fact comes up as a six, so Wallace loses the bet and the $50. Because he is indifferent to the loss, Wallace does not consider himself unlucky.

3. Beneficial Breakup: Barry is involved in an emotionally destructive romantic relationship. Nonetheless, he is deeply committed to the relationship, and does not notice anything out of the ordinary between him and his partner when his partner suddenly

[151] If necessary, we could construct a more convoluted example, a la Brewster's Millions. The title character is able to inherit a large fortune only if he first reduces his personal assets to nothing.

breaks up with him. Barry sees the ending of this relationship as a significant loss, but all of Barry's friends think that he doesn't know how lucky he is.

4. Cab Breakdown: Cecile is on her way to the train station when her cab breaks down, costing her several minutes and causing her to miss her train. She is upset, and forced to board a later train. Unknown to Cecile, her original train is wrecked and several passengers are injured while she is waiting for the next train. Cecile believes she is unlucky to miss her train.[152]

5. Suffering Lottery Winner: Sally is a normal lottery player who buys a ticket hoping to win. When she does in fact win, she does not fare very well. As a result of winning the lottery, she loses friends, succumbs to destructive excess, and become lethargic and unproductive.

6. Trivial Game Player: Ty is playing a game of Monopoly, recreationally. The game is not being played for any particular stakes, and Ty's interest in the game is mild at best. He does not consider the game very skill testing and does not attach any value to winning or losing. At one point, Ty is sure to lose unless he rolls exactly two ones on the dice. He does, and he goes on to win the game.

7. Failed Suicide: Faris is deeply depressed and jumps off of a tall building in an effort to kill himself. He lands on a hay cart that is driving past the building that he jumped off of. The cart breaks his falls and saves his life.

[152] A more detailed version of this example can be found in Rescher, 1995, pp. 81-82.

The first two examples, the Apathetic Lottery Winner and the Wealthy Gambler, are cases where, intuitively, the subject is lucky (in the first case) or unlucky (in the second case) despite the fact that neither subject consciously values their gain or loss. Moreover, there are no additional facts that could be introduced to these subjects to make them value the gain or loss. If this is unconvincing, we can always strengthen the examples by stipulating that the subject would not come to value the gain or loss under any circumstances (perhaps due to some psychological abnormality). Pritchard's L2 does not seem to get things right in this case. At least on the surface, it appears that neither subject finds their gain or loss significant, and neither subject would come to find the gain or loss significant if exposed to the relevant facts; nonetheless, intuitively they appear to be actually lucky and actually unlucky. Examples like these lead me to want to separate what its actually significant for the subject from what the subject, as a matter of fact, does or would believe is significant.

The Cab Breakdown example is a case where the concerned subject thinks that a certain state of affairs (that her cab broke down) is significantly bad for her even though, due to what would have been a different stroke of bad luck (the train being wrecked), it ends up being good for her that her cab breaks down. This seems to be the kind of example that fits neatly into Pritchard's L2. After all, even though Cecile considers herself to be unlucky, if she were availed of the relevant fact that the train she initially intended to board was later wrecked, she would probably consider herself lucky. However, the situation is not this simple. While it is correct to say that Cecile is lucky in light of missing the train that was wrecked, what should we say about her luckiness relative to her cab breaking down? Does the luckiness of missing the train cancel out the unluckiness of her cab breaking down? Can we even evaluate good or bad luck involved

in her cab breaking down without taking the train wreck into consideration? I do not think we can account for luck without some answer to these questions.

The Suffering Lottery Winner case is meant to be a variation of the Cab Breakdown case, but the positive features and negative features are not connected by coincidence (as in the Cab Breakdown case); Sally's fall is *due to* her winning the lottery. The main question that needs to be resolved for this example is, is Sally lucky, unlucky, both, or neither? Lottery wins are paradigmatic examples of luck, and it is hard to give up the intuition that Sally was lucky to win, even though she ended up worse off for having won. On the other hand, this seems to be a case where an incredibly unlikely event led to very negative consequences; on this description, it is tempting to characterize the case as unlucky. How should this combination be resolved? Pritchard's L2 is satisfied; Sally certainly thinks the event is significant, but L2 does nothing to unravel whether this case is good or bad luck.

A further issue is raised by the example of the Trivial Game Player. Board and card games, sporting events, and other trivial contests are some of the paradigmatic situations where luck (or at least, luck claims) abounds, but in many cases it is difficult to describe in what way the outcomes of these games are significant. Certainly, in some cases, such as games for large stakes of money or the performance of an athlete at the Olympics, the significance to the subject is apparent. However, in many more cases, the outcome of the game is inconsequential. If we are tempted by accounts that describe significance as what is good or bad for a subject, aside from what the subject does or would believe is good or bad for him or her, then we need to find a way to account for cases where the seeming gain or loss is not actually good or actually bad for the subject from an all-things-considered perspective. One approach would be to bite the bullet in these cases and claim that there is no real luck involved in trivial games; perhaps we only treat

them as lucky because of a resemblance to cases of actual luck. We pre-reflectively recognize that they would be lucky if the stakes were increased, but may be willing to concede that the state of affairs is not really lucky because the outcome does not really matter to anyone. This strikes me as intuitively unsatisfying; Ty's win seems to be a paradigmatic case of luck, and it is to a theory's credit that it is able to account for this as real luck.

A final complicated but instructional example is the case of the Failed Suicide. In this case, Faris clearly wants to kill himself, and we can further stipulate that he wants to because, in some sense, he thinks death will be good for him. Is Faris lucky to survive the fall? I think we can press our intuitions in a number of different directions by fleshing out the example in various ways. For example, if Faris's depression is chronic, and this attempt is merely one of many before Faris ultimately succeeds in killing himself, then his surviving may not be clearly lucky or unlucky. However, if Faris's depression is temporary and he later comes to regret his suicide attempt, we will probably say that he is lucky to have survived. On the other hand, if Faris was attempting to avoid capture by a group intent on torturing him to death, and he is captured due to his survival, he seems clearly unlucky to have survived his fall. In each case, considering what kind of information would influence our intuitions about Faris's luck in this example can be revealing.

3. Ethical and Meta-Ethical Considerations: the Limits of Theorizing About Significance

In this section, I propose that we can best understand the significance involved in cases of luck as something that is parasitic on our other ethical and meta-ethical commitments. From an initial look at the leading examples in this chapter, it should be clear that an interpretation of significance in terms of what is actually good or bad for a subject is more promising than a

reading of significance in terms of what the affected subject does or would believe is significant to them. Consider:

S: If a subject, S, is lucky that P, then P is good for S.

There will be some obvious disagreement over what counts as good for a subject, but I think it is uncontroversial to say that states of affairs that promote a subject's physical or psychological health, provide for the subject's social or financial security, provide comfort, or improve the subject's skills, talents, and abilities are, in general, good for the subject. Further specifying what it means for a state of affairs to be good for a subject is difficult, and an extended discussion on these topics will not be appropriate here. It may be an open question whether something like learning to play a musical instrument is good for a child, and so it may be an open question whether a particular child is lucky to be taking violin lessons. In this way, there is a desirable ambiguity in the language of what is good or bad for a subject. As far as our ethical and metaethical commitments vary, our evaluations of states of affairs as lucky or unlucky should vary as well. It should not be surprising that certain utilitarian versus rights based conceptions of 'good' will lead to different evaluations of the luckiness of living under a benevolent but fascist government, for example. However, this does not get us past the main questions raised by the leading examples in this chapter.

The reason that theorists like Pritchard might think that the subject's perception of the positive or negative value of an event seems like the right way to fix the luckiness of the event is because of a very plausible background intuition that, absent unusual complications, it is actually good for subjects to pursue what they see as beneficial and actually bad for them to avoid what they see as detrimental, for the psychological effect on the subject if nothing else. Similar considerations apply when we might think that a reasonable person's, a fully informed person's,

or the subject's later evaluation would be an appropriate indicator of the significance of a state of affairs. These are just a variety of ways of determining what is actually good or bad for a subject, and our ethical and metaethical commitments need to guide when each is appropriate. The significance at play in cases of luck is parasitic on this larger ethical framework.

Whatever our ethical and meta-ethical commitments are, there are a number of different positions from which we might want to evaluate what is good for a subject. As Andrew Latus writes,

> As for the value of the event, again it is overly simplistic to speak of *the* value of an event. Do we mean the value the person *does* place on the event, the value a reasonable person *would* place on the event, the value a person *will* (but does not yet) place on the event, or the objective value of the event quite aside from what the person might think about it? It is possible to imagine cases in which each of these is the right way of determining the value of the event.[153]

Rather than follow Latus in discussing significance in terms of value, I will try to capture significance more generally in terms of what is actually good for a subject.

S_2: If a subject, S, is lucky that P, then P is *actually* good for S.

I use the phrase "actually good for the subject" because, in those cases where what a subject thinks is good for him is different from what is actually good for him, whatever is actually in the subject's interest seems more important than what the subject believes about the situation, when making luck evaluations. Latus offers the example of a rare bottle collector finding a case of stubby beer bottles on the side of the road. Although the collector is the only one who cares about these beer bottles, he thinks that finding them is good for him, so he is lucky to find them. For Latus, this is supposed to be a case where finding the beer bottles is not, in some unspecified sense, objectively good for the subject, but the subject believes it is good for him. I would argue that, even if no one else cares about these particular beer bottles, the subject is lucky to find them

[153] Latus, 2003, p. 469, emphasis his.

because, to some extent, it is actually good for any subject to be happy and to pursue and succeed in his hobbies and projects. However, if someone disagreed on this ethical point (that it is *actually good* for any subject to pursue their hobbies), a sufficiently strong argument for why finding these bottles is not good for the collector could also be presented as a strong argument that the collector is not lucky to find them. In this way, facts about luck depend on certain ethical facts; specifically, they depend on facts about what is actually good or bad for a subject.

We can modify the example so that finding the bottles seems actually bad for the subject; suppose that the bottles have been irradiated and the subject will now die prematurely, then the subject is no longer clearly lucky to find the bottles. Intuitively, the bad luck of finding irradiated bottles might override the good luck of finding rare bottles that interest the subject as a collector; this state of affairs seems unlucky for the subject because it is actually bad for the subject to have found the bottles. However, this leads to an open meta-ethical question. On the one hand, we might think that this benefit of finding rare bottles to the collector is overridden by the detriment of being exposed to radiation such that it is not actually good for the subject to have found the bottles. On the other hand, we might think that it is actually both good for the subject to have found the bottles and bad for the agent to have been irradiated and therefore all-things-considered bad for the agent to have found the bottles, *without undermining the fact that it is good for the collector to have found the bottles*.

Now, it would be far too little to simply leave the appropriate sense of "actually good for the subject" completely open. Here, I would like to offer a few comments on helpful ways to approach these question when we are concerned with luck, specifically. As I established in Chapter I,[154] I am treating the form 'S is lucky that P' as the canonical form implicit in all luck claims. By relativizing luck to a particular proposition, we have a ready answer to some of these

[154] See p.24.

concerns. By focusing on the luckiness of a particular proposition for a subject, we can develop a more nuanced understanding of significance. First, since subjects are lucky in light of specific propositions, we can think about these propositions as describing sets of possible worlds: ***W*** is the set of possible worlds described by P. Now, for a subject to be lucky in light of the proposition itself, there needs to be a relation that holds between the subject and all of the possible worlds described by the proposition such that, if S is lucky that P, there is something about all the worlds described by P that is good for S. For the sake of grammatical clarity, I will employ the following language:

> Advantage: If some part of a world is good for a subject, I will say that the subject gains or possesses that part of the world as an advantage. 'X is good for S' and 'S has advantage X' are interchangeable terminology.
>
> Disadvantage: If some part of a world is bad for a subject, I will say that the subject suffers or possesses that part of the world as a disadvantage. 'X is bad for S' and 'S has disadvantage X' are interchangeable terminology.
>
> Involves: I will say that a proposition, P, involves an advantage, A, for a subject, S, if and only if in every world described by P, S has advantage A.

I will also note that the avoidance of an advantage will count as a disadvantage, and the avoidance of a disadvantage will count as an advantage.

Using this terminology, I offer the following understanding of the significance involved in cases of luck. First, when we think about simple cases of luck, such as 'John is lucky that he won the lottery,' the analysis is easy. John is lucky that he won the lottery because, whatever the advantage he gains from winning the lottery, he will have this advantage in all the relevant possible worlds (described by 'he, John, won the lottery'). The proposition 'John won the lottery'

involves an advantage for John, and so he is lucky that he won the lottery. As we turn to more complicated examples, like those at the beginning of this chapter, relativizing luck claims to propositions will become increasingly useful.

While some concerns regarding which point of view is relevant for determining whether something is an advantage or disadvantage for a subject will have to depend on specific ethical and metaethical commitments beyond the scope of this project, I can address two significant concerns. I will address how to evaluate mixed luck cases by proposing an analysis on which a subject can be both lucky and unlucky relative to the same proposition. This approach will also address the question of how to understand the temporal point of view needed to evaluate significance; in many cases, a subject might seem lucky at one point in time, but, upon seeing further consequences, seem to be non-lucky, less lucky, or unlucky. On my proposal, all of these evaluations can be accurate.

So, how do we account for situations where a subject is intuitively both lucky *and* non-lucky (or lucky *and* unlucky)? The clearest example of this kind of situation (and the example of which my account will give the clearest diagnosis) is the Suffering Lottery Winner. There are a couple of reasonable luck evaluations that can be made in this case. It seems lucky that Sally wins the lottery. However, she also seems unlucky that this leads her to personal ruin; she is unlucky to lose friends, unlucky to become idle, and so forth. This plurality of intuitive luck evaluations can be easily dealt with by relativizing the claim to a specific proposition. For example, Sally is clearly lucky to win the lottery because 'Sally won the lottery' involves an advantage for Sally; whatever advantage Sally gets by winning the lottery, in every possible world where Sally won the lottery, Sally has this advantage. It is less clear if Sally is lucky relative to 'Sally won the lottery *and* subsequently, fell into ruin.' In all of the worlds described

by this proposition, I suggest that Sally has both a significant advantage and a significant disadvantage. On my account, she is both lucky and unlucky to have won the lottery *and* fallen into ruin; the advantage and disadvantage do not cancel each other out.

On this approach, it is possible for a single proposition to involve multiple advantages and disadvantages for a subject. If Sally is lucky that she won the lottery and fell into ruin *and* Sally is unlucky that she won the lottery and fell into ruin, this will be because the proposition 'Sally won the lottery and fell into ruin' involves both an advantage and a disadvantage for Sally. Using the same conceptual machinery, seemingly contradictory luck claims made at different times can all be correct. Consider this sequence:

1. Sally wins the lottery and she is evaluated as being lucky that she won the lottery.
2. Sally falls into ruin as a consequence of winning the lottery and is evaluated as unlucky to have won the lottery.
3. Sally discovers a robust and meaningful spiritual life that she could not have without first winning the lottery and falling into ruin. She is evaluated, ultimately, as lucky to have won the lottery.

All these claims seem correct, if the propositions involved are properly fleshed out with the relevant implicit information. First, Sally wins the lottery and is evaluated as lucky in the normal way. Second, Sally falls into ruin; being precise, she is not actually unlucky that she won the lottery, she is only unlucky that she won the lottery *and* fell into ruin. 'She won the lottery' still describes possible worlds that do not involve the disadvantage of falling into ruin for Sally, but the possible worlds described by 'She won the lottery and fell into ruin' do involve this disadvantage. Finally, Sally discovers a robust and meaningful spiritual life, so she is evaluated

as lucky that she won the lottery (which is still true), but more precisely, she is lucky that she won the lottery *and* fell into ruin *and* discovered a robust and meaningful spiritual life.

I am working off a rather strong meta-ethical assumption that subjects can have advantages even if the advantage is part of a larger complex that does not turn out to be all-things-considered good for the subject. If a reader does not accept this assumption, then I propose understanding the accuracy of a luck claim by evaluating significance from the point of view of someone who only has access to the information contained in the proposition. In this way, we can preserve the intuition that a Suffering Lottery Winner is still really lucky to win the lottery, even if winning the lottery leads to a greater disadvantage than advantage. Then, when considering the more specific proposition 'she won the lottery and fell into ruin,' one might have to appeal to a larger framework of ethical and meta-ethical understanding to determine whether or not the subject can be rightly said to have any advantage at all; in other words, if you believe that advantages and disadvantages can cancel each other out or override each other, that system of cancelling or overriding will need to be built into your understanding of the luckiness of a proposition for a subject. This would also mean a new understanding of what it means for a proposition to involve an advantage for a subject; rather than the advantage being something present in all possible worlds describe by the proposition, we should say that a proposition involves an advantage for a subject if and only if the subject has an advantage that is, in some sense, not undermined[155] by any other part of the proposition.

Nicholas Rescher's approach moves in this direction when he describes a distinction between unconditional and conditional luck. He writes:

[155] My language here is intentionally vague; exactly how this alternate understanding of how propositions might involve advantages for subjects would need to be developed in line with the alternate meta-ethical understanding of how advantages and disadvantages might cancel or override each other.

> One is unconditionally lucky (or unlucky) when something intrinsically good (or bad) happens fortuitously. Finding a treasure trove is a piece of unconditional good luck; stumbling and breaking one's arm is a piece of unconditional bad luck. By contrast, one is conditionally lucky (or unlucky) if that bit of good or bad fortune is good or bad only on the basis of some extraneous considerations. Good luck can occur within bad luck or bad luck within good.[156]

It can be difficult to piece together exactly how Rescher wants to identify what is intrinsically good (or bad) for a subject, but he offers some illustration with the following examples:

> Steve was involved in a major train wreck but by a fluke escaped unhurt. Jane won the raffle and won an all-expenses-paid vacation in a tropical paradise, but she was bruised when caught up in a political demonstration there. Missing the bus is bad as such, but would be a good thing if the bus later plunged over a precipice. Winning the girl is all well and good, but might be a bad thing if it leads to one's being stabbed to death by a jealous rival.[157]

Rescher's suggestion is that we differentiate cases where something is good or bad for a subject directly (unconditional luck) from cases where the initial goodness or badness is undermined by some additional fact (conditional luck). What he identifies as conditional luck is what I would identify as a case where the relevant proposition involves a combination of advantages and disadvantages. In a more elaborate version of the Cab Breakdown example, Rescher explains that while there is some bad luck for the subject involved (such as the cab breaking down in the first place), this is clearly outweighed[158] by the good luck of narrowly avoiding boarding the wrecked train. On my approach, I do not think that the good luck will outweigh bad luck in this way; instead the good luck and bad luck simply coexist. On my account, there is no need to evaluate whether the subject is lucky or unlucky *overall*, because, in complex cases, a subject is

[156] Rescher, 1995, p. 81, emphasis removed. Here, Rescher references unconditional luck. Elsewhere, he will describe this as categorical luck.

[157] ibid.

[158] In reference to his more complicated example, Recher writes, "This one piece of good luck clearly outweighs all the rest and serves to make you lucky overall. In a complex transaction of this sort, it is ultimately the size of the biggest piece of luck involved that determines the subject's overall condition of lucky versus unlucky." Rescher, 1995, p. 83.

simply lucky in light of the advantages involved in the proposition and unlucky in light of the disadvantages also involved in the proposition.

I think that my approach of having advantages and disadvantages not cancel or override each other, agrees well with pre-reflective intuitions about cases such as Sally the Suffering Lottery Winner. If we exclude the facts about how Sally's newfound fortune leads to disaster in her personal relationships and growth, this is a paradigmatic example of a luck. My hypothetical opponent would probably claim that Sally is not, in this case, actually lucky to win the lottery; she merely appears lucky to win the lottery until we are availed of the facts of the destructive results this lottery win has on her life. This seems too strong a claim. If someone unaware of the destructive results that winning the lottery would bring to Sally witnessed her win and proclaimed her to be lucky, then we would not want to say that this evaluation is actually *incorrect*. It seems more plausible to say that although Sally is lucky to win the lottery, she is *also* unlucky to win the lottery (and may be more severely unlucky to win that she was lucky to win). I think that this is the best way to account for the complexity of these luck claims without allowing for deeply unintuitive possibilities, such as subjects who turn out to not actually be lucky to win the lottery.

A persistent opponent might continue to protest; the exact difficulty that we have with cases like Sally's is that we do not know how to think about the *event* of her winning the lottery. The claim is that my account does not do anything to alleviate the confusion about how we should evaluate whether the event of winning the lottery was good or bad for Sally, apart from how we fold that event into one or more propositions. I reply that Sally's case is complicated, and it is fitting that the way we ought to evaluate the event of her winning the lottery is complicated in the way I've just described (the event is a combination of good for Sally and bad

for Sally). It does not seem necessary to me that every event is clearly evaluable as only good or only bad for a subject.

Yet, there is a tempting distinction that could be made at this point. There is a certain all-things-considered perspective we might want to appeal to in making our luck evaluations; we may want to distinguish between the more myopic propositions which exclude one or more of the connected advantages and disadvantages (such as Sally's merely winning the lottery in the Suffering Lottery Winner example) and the more detailed propositions that include all the associated advantages and disadvantages (such as Sally's winning the lottery and consequently losing her personal relationships and productivity, from the same example). There is some temptation to use this distinction to evaluate whether or not a subject is *really* lucky and to give the luck evaluations based on the more detailed propositions priority over narrower ones. After all, in many contexts, we think that having access to more information, so long as it is not misleading, leads not only to different evaluations, but to better ones. In the Cab breakdown example, Cecile will bemoan her bad luck until she is informed of the train wreck, at which point she would likely celebrate her good luck instead.

I must admit to some ambivalence on the role this distinction plays for luck evaluation. On one hand, the rough argument just given is intuitively compelling. After all, finding what best serves our entire network of interests is often more important to us than what serves one particular interest from a narrowed point of view. On the other hand, I want to resist the temptation to only use the luck evaluations from the all-things-considered perspective to fix which features of the world are *really* lucky. Earlier, I made a distinction between merely apparent luck, (where a subject believes she is lucky either accurately, in which case it is also real luck, or erroneously, due to a misleading information, irrationality, or a psychological

defect), and real luck. The case of the confident lottery player[159] was given as the clearest example of how a subject might make a mistake in her evaluation of her own luckiness. The merely apparent luck that results from misleading information, irrationality, or a psychological defect seems very different from the luck we correctly identify by evaluating things from a less than all-things-considered point of view. It seems mistaken to say that Sally is not actually lucky to win the lottery because her win leads to her losing her personal relationships and productivity. It seems more accurate to say that she is both lucky to win the lottery and also unlucky to win the lottery and subsequently suffers.

Additionally, from an all-things-considered point of view, many central examples of luck diminish to unimportance. Winning a game of Monopoly may be completely insignificant in the long run, but rolling exactly a twelve on a pair of dice to win (when all other rolls would result in a loss) is a paradigmatic case of luck. Further, we often make luck evaluations without knowledge of the future advantages and disadvantages that might be involved. The fact that a subject is lucky that she won the lottery or found buried treasure seems unaffected by consequences of this win or discovery; if the original luck can be neutralized or cancelled out, then we would have to accept that we are almost always mistaken in the luck evaluations we make in everyday situations due to their diminished significance over the long run or due to our lack of knowledge of adverse consequences.

Another, more serious meta-ethical objection to my approach might run as follows: someone might argue the deeper position that there is no way to distinguish what is *actually* good for a subject. Suppose, for example, that what is evaluated as good for a subject can be done from a number of different perspectives, with no perspective being more legitimate than or

[159] See pp. 27-28.

overriding any other.[160] In response to this objection, I am inclined to bite the bullet and acknowledge that my account is incompatible with a range of non-cognitivist meta-ethical theories. I am content with this concession because, although I will not argue for my position here, I think that if a metaethical theory does not distinguish between what appears good for a person from various vantage points and what is actually or really good for that person, then that is a flaw of the meta-ethical theory itself.

4. Impersonal and Personal Luck

Another pressing concern raised by the lead examples in this chapter concerns how to deal with cases where the gain or loss is trivial to the subject, but the subject is still intuitively lucky. This question is highlighted by the Trivial Game Player example and is also central to the cases of the Apathetic Lottery Winner and the Wealthy Gambler. To address this, I propose making the following distinction:

IL: If a subject, S, is impersonally lucky that P, then P involves an advantage for S, and P would involve the same advantage for any subject, *ceteris paribus*.

PL: If a subject, S, is personally lucky that P, then P involves an advantage for S, and P would not involve an advantage for some subjects, *ceteris paribus*.

Note that these are presented roughly and as merely necessary conditions; more detailed definitions will be presented in Chapter V. On my account, there are two kinds of advantages a subject can have, and this naturally distinguishes two different kinds of luck. A subject is impersonally lucky when a proposition involves an advantage that is established as an advantage without any consideration of the particular subject involved. For example, winning the lottery is impersonally lucky because winning is established as an advantage from the rules of the lottery

[160] I imagine that some variation of this claim would be defended by proponents of certain non-cognitive meta-ethical positions, among others.

alone. It does not matter who is playing the lottery or what the player's characteristics are. This is also clear in examples of playing games or sports. In these contexts, not only do the rules often establish what is treated as an advantage (points, faux currency, or some other resource), but also the rules of the game can establish what counts as a desirable or undesirable intermediate position in the game. However, impersonal luck is not restricted to these small, well-defined cases. Depending on our ethical commitments, there may be more or fewer cases of impersonal luck in ordinary life. If something is an advantage for every subject that possesses it (some candidates that might come to mind are survival, strong health, and the avoidance of pain), then it is impersonally so.

The second kind of luck, personal luck, can be defined in opposition to impersonal luck. If a proposition that is lucky for a subject involves an advantage that is established as an advantage only with reference to the involved subject's particular interests then the subject is personally lucky. The best example of this may be Latus's example of the bottle collector. If the subject who finds the particular bottles is the only one who actually values them, then finding the bottles is only established as an advantage when we consider the particular subject involved and his desire to collect this particular kind of bottle. It is advantageous for this subject to find the beer bottles to the extent that this promotes his happiness and success in his hobby. For any other subject, finding the beer bottles would be, presumably, insignificant.

This distinction will be helpful for analyzing cases where there is a point of view, often the affected subject's own, from which a seemingly clear case of luck does not seem significant. By separating impersonal luck from personal luck, we can distinguish between cases where a subject is lucky because they receive an advantage that is good for people generally, independent of what they personally think of it (see the Unwilling Lottery Winner and the Wealthy Gambler),

and cases where the subject is lucky because it serves their particular interests (such as Latus's bottle collector). When a subject is impersonally lucky, they receive something that is an advantage independent of their personal characteristics. When a subject is personally lucky, they receive something that is an advantage that depends on their personal characteristics; something is advantageous for the subject (either due to the idiosyncrasies of the subject's preferences or due to some other personal characteristics that make it advantageous for this particular subject), so possessing it is an advantage for this subject but not for all other subjects. This distinction also helps with cases such as the Trivial Game Player; even though the game, in a sense, does not really matter to the subject, the rules of the game establish certain things as advantages and disadvantages for players of the game.

Interestingly, this distinction allows me to further account for another complication; in certain cases of luck, a person can be any combination of personally lucky, impersonally lucky, personally unlucky, and impersonally unlucky at the same time. Since a single proposition can involve many advantages and disadvantages for a subject, we can imagine cases of the following kind: suppose that Betsy finds a crate of rare bottles and gold abandoned on the side of the road. Betsy is impersonally lucky that she found the gold. Additionally, Betsy is an avid bottle collector who recognizes and appreciates the value of the rare bottles in the crate. So, she is personally lucky that she found the bottles. However, if we add that the bottles and gold are irradiated and will make Betsy ill, then she is impersonally unlucky that she found the bottles and gold. Finally, we can add that Betsy has a petty family who will resent her finding the gold and treat her poorly because of it. So, Betsy is also personally unlucky that she found the gold. An account of how I ultimately want to define impersonal and personal advantages and the network of propositions involving these advantages will be reserved for Chapter V.

5. Revisiting the Examples

Now, I would like to revisit the leading examples in this chapter to show how my approach leads to answers to the problematic questions raised in each:

1. Unwilling Lottery Winner: Due to certain religious, moral, or philosophical commitments, Ursula is opposed to possessing a large amount of money. For some reason, she is entered into a fair lottery with a substantial monetary prize, and she wins. Because of these commitments, she is at best indifferent to winning this money, and at worst bothered that she now has to dispose of it. She considers herself unlucky.

In the case of the Unwilling Lottery Winner, the main tension is between the intuition that Ursula is lucky that she won the lottery (lottery wins are, after all, perhaps the most paradigmatic examples of good luck) and the premise that Ursula is either indifferent or opposed to the monetary gain associated with it. We will set aside the obvious question of why Ursula is entered into the lottery in the first place. On my account, the question of whether it is good or bad for Ursula can be addressed simply by considering the distinction between impersonal and personal luck. Given the context of the lottery, Ursula is impersonally lucky to win, but given her commitments opposing the possession of her lottery winnings, she is personally unlucky or non-lucky to win (depending on the strength of her commitment to not receiving the money). She is both impersonally lucky in light of the impersonal advantage involved in having won the lottery and personally unlucky in light of the disadvantage involved in gaining a large sum of money that she would (strongly) prefer not to have.

2. Wealthy Gambler: Wallace is a multi-billionaire, who does not consider a gain or loss of $50 to make any difference to him, whatsoever. Wallace bets $50 on the roll of a six-sided die. The terms of the bet are that Wallace will win unless the die roll comes up as a

six, leaving him to win on any roll from one to five. When the die is rolled, it does in fact comes up as a six, so Wallace loses the bet and the $50. Because he is indifferent to the loss, Wallace does not consider himself unlucky.

The case of the Wealthy Gambler is similar to the case of the Unwilling Lottery Winner. In this example, Wallace is clearly impersonally unlucky to lose the die roll. Unlike in the case of the Unwilling Lottery Winner, there is no competing good luck to compete with the bad luck; this is a simpler case where the interested subject simply gets the evaluation wrong. Wallace is impersonally unlucky, even if he does not think that he is. This example is useful to emphasize an important feature of my approach. Even if Wallace were to think he was unlucky, this would not then make him personally unlucky (in addition to his being impersonally unlucky). Rather, he would simply be getting the evaluation of his case correct. Personal luck is not a matter of how the affected subject thinks or feels about their situation (unless we build in an ethical commitment to such subjective feelings always being good for subjects), it is a matter of whether or not the affected subject possess particular features such that a proposition involves an advantage or disadvantage for them that it would not involve for someone else. Whatever Wallace thinks about it, losing $50 would be a disadvantage for any subject.

Another consideration this example brings up is that luckiness, on my account, will be fixed by the *appropriateness* of adopting luck attitudes (i.e. the appropriateness of adjusting certain attitudes) not the actual adoption of those attitudes. So, Wallace might, rightly, recognize that he is unlucky in this case, but still not *feel* unlucky in the sense that he chooses not to adopt luck attitudes toward himself and his disadvantage while nevertheless being aware that it would be *appropriate* if he were to adopt luck attitudes. I will discuss how we should understand this appropriateness in more detail in Chapter V.

3. Beneficial Breakup: Barry is involved in an emotionally destructive romantic relationship. Nonetheless, he is deeply committed to the relationship, and does not notice anything out of the ordinary between him and his partner when his partner suddenly breaks up with him. Barry sees the ending of this relationship as a significant loss, but all of Barry's friends think that he doesn't know how lucky he is.

There may be some temptation to treat the case of the Beneficial Breakup similarly to the Unwilling Lottery Winner. However, this case is meant to consider a disagreement over what is actually an advantage or disadvantage for a particular subject, not a prima facie conflict of good luck versus bad luck. Hopefully, the stipulations make it clear that it is not advantageous for Barry to continue in his destructive relationship; it is, in fact, disadvantageous. In this case, Barry is wrong about what is advantageous for him, so he is not actually (personally or impersonally) unlucky that this relationship ends. He is, in fact, lucky, as his friends believe.

4. Cab Breakdown: Cecile is on her way to the train station when her cab breaks down, costing her several minutes and causing her to miss her train. She is upset, and forced to board a later train. Unknown to Cecile, her original train is wrecked and several passengers are injured while she is waiting for the next train. Cecile believes she is unlucky to miss her train.

The Cab Breakdown example has already been discussed at some length in the previous section. In short, Cecile is unlucky that her cab breaks down as this involves the disadvantage of missing her train; in every possible world where her cab breaks down, she is delayed. But what about whether Cecile is lucky or unlucky that her cab breaks down *and* her original train gets into a wreck? In every possible world where her cab breaks down and her original train is wrecked, Cecile has both an advantage and a disadvantage; she has the advantage of avoiding the train

wreck, and she has the disadvantage of being delayed. So, Cecile is lucky that her cab breaks down and her original train gets into a wreck, in light of the advantage involved, *and* Cecile is unlucky that her cab breaks down and her original train gets into a wreck, in light of the disadvantage involved.

5. Suffering Lottery Winner: Sally is a normal lottery player who buys a ticket hoping to win. When she does in fact win, she does not fare very well. As a result of winning the lottery, she loses friends, succumbs to destructive excess, and become lethargic and unproductive.

The case of the Suffering Lottery Winner has already been discussed in previous sections and can receive the same treatment as the Cab breakdown example. Nothing in my approach hinges on whether the advantage (from the lottery win) and disadvantage (falling into destructive excess) are causally related.

6. Trivial Game Player: Ty is playing a game of Monopoly, recreationally. The game is not being played for any particular stakes, and Ty's interest in the game is mild at best. He does not consider the game very skill testing and does not attach any value to winning or losing. At one point, Ty is sure to lose unless he rolls exactly two ones on the dice. He does, and he goes on to win the game.

The example of the Trivial Game Player can now be dealt with simply. Ty is impersonally lucky to roll a pair of ones at just the right time, and he is impersonally lucky to win the game of Monopoly, since the rules of the game establish winning as an advantage for Ty. Even though the game is ultimately inconsequential to Ty's life, he is still lucky that he won.

7. Failed Suicide: Faris is deeply depressed and jumps off of a tall building in an effort to kill himself. He lands on a hay cart that is driving past the building that he jumped off of. The cart breaks his falls and saves his life.

The last example in this chapter is the most difficult to give a clear decision on. First of all, it is not clear whether or not it is actually advantageous or disadvantageous for Faris to survive his suicide attempt. This may depend on background ethical commitments, for those who have strong beliefs on the moral permissibility of suicide. For most, I think, Faris is at least impersonally lucky that his suicide attempt fails, as survival seems to be an impersonal advantage. Whether or not Faris is also personally unlucky that his suicide attempt failed will depend on answers to particular ethical questions. In substantial matters like this, any account of luck ought to defer to an ethical and meta-ethical analysis.

6. Conclusion

As we've seen from other luck theorists, the significance criterion is sometimes added to accounts as an afterthought, or, less harshly, set aside as a less interesting or uninteresting side issue. However, the examples raised in this chapter hopefully show a range of interesting questions surrounding the significance involved in many cases of luck. The approach I presented allows for diagnoses of the leading examples that return intuitive results while providing a way of identifying the relevant considerations that make luck evaluations difficult in unclear cases (such as Failed Suicide). Some disagreements about luck result directly from disagreements about what is actually good for a particular subject. Laying out exactly what counts as good or bad for a subject is a matter that lays beyond the scope of a theory of luck. But, fluidity with our ethical and metaethical commitments is a virtue of an account of luck; it would be very strange if different ethical and metaethical commitments never led to different luck evaluations.

Chapter IV: Approaching a Theory of Luck

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I described one major way that my approach to theorizing about luck diverges from traditional accounts, by placing the significance criterion at the center of my discussion. Rather than using the significance criterion to filter abnormal states of affairs into mere matters of luck and actual cases of luck, I suggest that we first look at the way that a state of affairs is significant for a subject and then consider under which circumstances that state of affairs is abnormal. So far, I have addressed one way that luckiness appears to be a subjective property; in short, what is actually advantageous or disadvantageous[161] for a particular subject will depend on certain ethical and metaethical commitments beyond the scope of this project, but we can distinguish between impersonal and personal advantages and disadvantages[162] based on whether a state of affairs is lucky for any subject in the same circumstances or only for a particular subject.

The purpose of this chapter is to finish motivating the account of luck I will present in Chapter V by directly addressing the question of whether (and in what way) luck is subjective. The second major way my approach to theorizing about luck diverges from traditional accounts is that, by treating luckiness (the property, 'lucky that p') as a dependent property that exists only in light of certain established practices and attitudes, cases of luck will be identified by the

[161] As a reminder, I am using the language of advantage and disadvantage as shorthand for 'that which is good (or bad) for a subject' for the sake of grammatical convenience. See p. 100 for the definitions.

[162] See pp. 108-111.

appropriateness of adopting luck attitudes[163] in those cases. In contrast to some contemporary thought about luck, my account does not allow for widespread error in our pre-reflective use of the luck concept since the practices surrounding the use of the concept play the central role of establishing when we are using the concept correctly.

In this chapter, I start by looking at ordinary language luck claims. In order to devise a useful paraphrase from ordinary language luck claims to luck propositions, I discuss Searle's distinctions between intrinsic and observer-relative properties, and his distinction between institutional and personally-subjective properties. I conclude this section by arguing that 'lucky that p' is a dependent property. I then contrast this to more traditional approaches to theorizing about luck in order to highlight the differences in my approach.

2. Searlean Distinctions: Intrinsic, Social, and Personally-Subjective Properties

One way to start developing a theory of luck is to look at the kind of property luck is, and one place to begin this investigation is by considering the way that luck appears prima facie in common language luck claims. Here, luck appears as a predicate in a few different ways. For example, luck appears as a simple predicate of several things including subjects (e.g. 'John is so lucky'), actions (e.g. 'That was a lucky shot'), events (e.g. 'Winning that lottery was lucky'), and states of affairs (e.g. 'That he won the lottery is lucky'). Sometimes, luck also appears as a relation between (or as a property of the relation between) subjects and other entities. For example, in the claims 'Winning the lottery was lucky for John,' 'John is lucky that he won the lottery,' and 'John is lucky to be so tall,' luck appears to relate a subject (John) and an event, a state of affairs, and a personal trait, respectively.[164] As we may recall from Chapter I, I take the

[163] See pp. 19-21 for my rough characterization of luck attitudes.

[164] For a full discussion of how my account will accommodate this diversity in ordinary language, see Chapter V "An Analysis of Everyday Luck Claims" pp. 156-161.

form 'S is lucky that P,' where S is a subject and P is a proposition to be the canonical form[165] that all common language luck claims express.

Common language luck claims are diverse and opaque, and making any general observations is going to be difficult. Nevertheless, observing the ways in which luck is commonly invoked may be instructive in a limited way. The task at hand is to find a useful paraphrase from common language luck claims to the luck propositions expressed by those claims and a further paraphrase from those luck propositions to reduced propositions that do not invoke a concept of luck or luckiness. Luck is a non-primitive concept, so a luck proposition ought to be reducible to a proposition with the same truth conditions that does not invoke the concept of luck or luckiness. I consider it a virtue of a theory of luck that all reduced luck propositions share a similar structure, as this supports the idea that all common language luck claims are invoking a singular shared concept, rather than a collection of distinct, loosely-related concepts under the same name. At the end of Chapter V, after introducing my account of luck, I will offer an analysis of everyday luck claims to show how this can be done.

The first step in my effort to discover and describe the structure and content of reduced luck propositions is to question whether luckiness as an objective or subjective property. However, since the language of objectivity and subjectivity pervades so many philosophical subjects with varying degrees of clarity, I want to explore some more specific language for this discussion. Borrowing from Searle,[166] we can call a property 'intrinsic' if an object[167] can have

[165] See p. 24.

[166] Searle, John R. *The Construction of Social Reality*. The Free Press, 1995. pp. 9-13.

[167] Although many upcoming examples will focus on mundane physical objects, the distinctions made in this section are meant to apply broadly to all property-bearers.

that property "independent of any observers or users,"[168] and we can call a property 'observer-relative' if that property "only exists relative to the intentionality of subjects."[169] As Searle writes:

> 1. The sheer existence of the physical object in front of me does not depend on any attitudes we may take toward it.
>
> 2. It has many features that are intrinsic in the sense that they do not depend on any attitudes of observers or users. For example, it has a certain mass and a certain chemical composition.
>
> 3. It has other features that exist only relative to the intentionality of subjects. For example, it is a screwdriver. To have a general term, I will call such features 'observer-relative.' [170]

To take another example, that an event has a certain spatio-temporal location is intrinsic, but that it is a baseball game is observer-relative. An interesting consequence of Searle's distinction is that, "for any observer-relative feature F, *seeming to be F* is logically prior to *being F*, because -- appropriately understood -- seeming to be F is a necessary condition of being F."[171] Here, 'seems to be F' may be better understood as 'is treated or used as F' rather than 'is believed to be F.' Beliefs about the object in question at some specific moment in time do not generally determine its F-ness, unless having those temporally-anchored beliefs about the object is part of what constitutes treating the object as an F (see my example of baseball games in section 3 of this chapter). For example, for an object to be of a kind that is treated as a screwdriver by a community of users does require at any particular moment that someone actually has the belief of it that it is a screwdriver. If it falls behind a piece of furniture or is buried underground, it is

[168] ibid, p. 10.

[169] ibid.

[170] ibid.

[171] ibid, p. 13.

still the kind of thing that is treated and used as a screwdriver; this is the sense in which it *seems to be* a screwdriver.

For whom the property must seem to exist will depend on another distinction. For Searle, observer-relative properties can be further divided between social, institutional, and personally subjective properties.[172] Social properties (and institutional properties, a sub-set of social properties)[173] exist independent of any individual person's opinion or evaluation, while personally-subjective properties do depend on the opinion or evaluation of an individual observer.[174] A necessary condition of an object's having a social or institutional property is that the object seems to have the property to a community of observers or users, while a necessary condition of an object's having a personally subjective property is that the object seems to have the property to an individual observer. For example, that a particular garment in my closet is my favorite shirt is personally subjective; in order for it to actually be my favorite shirt, it is necessary that it seems *to me* to be my favorite shirt, in the sense that it is the object treated by me as my favorite shirt. On the other hand, that a particular object in my pocket is a five dollar bill is a social fact; in order for it to actually be a five dollar bill *a community of observers or users*[175] must relate to it as a five dollar bill. Whether or not the object seems to be a five dollar bill *to me* as an individual has no decisive bearing on whether or not the object is, in fact, a five dollar bill.

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[172] Here, I deviate from Searle's language, as I find his notions of ontological subjectivity and epistemic objectivity potentially confusing and grammatically cumbersome for my purposes.

[173] Searle's distinction between institutional facts and social facts can be found in *The Construction of Social Reality*, p. 38.

[174] In general, personally subjective properties will mainly include characteristics that are a matter of individual personal opinion and certain aesthetic properties.

[175] It is worth reiterating here that this is a merely necessary condition of the object's being a five dollar bill, and there are additional constraints (such as the bill not being a counterfeit) that must be met to make it truly a five dollar bill.

I am skeptical of whether the distinction that Searle makes between institutional facts and non-institutional social facts can be made cleanly. He uses the examples of hyenas hunting a lion and Congress passing legislation to illustrate this distinction: "for example, hyenas hunting a lion and Congress passing legislation are both cases of social facts. Institutional facts, it will turn out, are a special subclass of social facts. Congress passing legislation is an institutional fact; hyenas hunting a lion is not."[176] Since this distinction will have no bearing on my proposal, I will avoid talking about it at length here. Further, I will call the class of properties I am interested in 'dependent properties,' to avoid confusion with the Searlean categories of institutional and non-institutional social properties.

Dependent properties are partially constituted by the way observers relate to them. Searle proposes 'X counts as Y in C'[177] as the characteristic form of the rules that establish social facts, where C is the relevant context. For example, whether a particular object (X) is a screwdriver (Y) is established by certain contextual facts (C), such as the object's history of creation and function. Likewise, a gathering of people will count as a baseball game or a wedding only in the presence of certain contextual factors; in the case of the baseball game, a certain kind of participation and intention from the people present will be required, and in the case of the wedding additional legal or religious sanctioning may also be required. Luck follows a similar structure. Whether or not a person counts as lucky with reference to a particular state-of-affairs depends on contextual facts. The canonical form of luck claims that I have been using, 'S is lucky that P,' mirrors the beginning of this form; whether some subject (X) counts as 'lucky that

[176] Searle, p. 38.

[177] ibid, p. 28.

P' (Y) will depend on certain contextual facts. In Chapter V,[178] I will explain the relevant contextual factors (C) in terms of whether advantages and disadvantages involved in the proposition P are ordinarily or extraordinarily acquired by the putatively lucky subject.

3. Codification of Social Properties

Searle raises a further issue when we consider whether the logical necessity of 'seeming to be F' to actually be F applies to types or to tokens of social facts:

> Where money is concerned a particular token could be money even if no one thought it was money, but where cocktail parties are concerned if no one thinks of a particular event that it is a cocktail party, it is not a cocktail party. I think the reason we treat cocktail parties differently from money in this regard has to do with codification. In general, if the institution in question is codified in an 'official' form, such as in the laws concerning money, then the self-referentiality[179] in question is a feature of the type. If it is informal, uncodified, then the self-referentiality applies to each token. Codification specifies the features the token must have in order to be an instance of the type.[180]

I think that Searle is mistaken here. The differences between money (and other objects like tools) and cocktail parties (or other events like baseball games or wars) is better explained by the difference between dependent properties that exist merely in virtue of their history of creation, function, and surrounding practices, and those that exist also in virtue of some kind of active subjective participation. An object may be a piece of money or a tool merely in virtue of its history of being produced and used in the appropriate way. Even if it is never explicitly codified, a forgotten piece of money or a tool still seems to be what it is without any existing subject believing of it that it is what it is. On the other hand, cocktail parties, baseball games, and similar events require active participants that believe of the token event that it is the kind of event that it is. To play right field, the player must believe that he is playing a baseball game; he

[178] See pp. 146-156.

[179] The 'self-referentiality' Searle addresses here is the logical necessity of seeming to be φ in order to actually be φ.

[180] Searle, p. 53.

cannot merely stand in a certain place and behave in certain ways. A man standing in the outfield of a baseball stadium with a compulsion to catch flying objects is not 'playing right field' the way that a baseball player consciously trying to help his team win is. We do not need to appeal to the idea of codification to distinguish when seeming to be φ is a necessary condition of being φ for each token or only for the type.

The idea of codification does play another, more important role, however. Searle points out that, for any "genuine institutional facts,"[181] we *could* codify the rules explicitly.[182] This seems evident enough, so long as we allow vagueness into our codification. However, explicit codification comes at the cost of "the flexibility, spontaneity, and informality that the practice has in its uncodified form."[183] Having the status of instantiating a dependent property carries with it additional status beyond the intrinsic features of the object, relation, or event, most clearly in the form of motivating and justifying certain attitudes toward the object or event. In the case of friendships, dates, and cocktail parties, "this is shown by the fact that the people involved have certain sorts of justified expectations from a friendship/date/cocktail party, which they do not have from an identical set of arrangements about which they do not believe that it is a friendship/date/cocktail party."[184] This endowment of additional status is what distinguishes a codified dependent property from a rigorous description of an intrinsic property.

[181] ibid, p. 87.

[182] The possibility of explicit codification is one of the ways that Searle distinguishes institutional facts from non-institutional social facts. Here, I remain skeptical that such a distinction makes sense, as I am skeptical that any social practices are actually uncodifiable. As before, this distinction will not bear on my project.

[183] Searle, p. 88.

[184] ibid.

4. Luck as an Uncodified, Dependent Property

With the landscape carved up in this way, I can now turn to the question of what kind of property luckiness (the property of being 'lucky that P') is. As was addressed briefly in Chapter I,[185] the notion that luck is personally subjective is something of a non-starter. However, even though luck is not personally subjective, it is subject sensitive; it is not necessary for any particular individual to believe that something is lucky for it to actually be lucky, but it is subject sensitive to the extent that whether or not a state of affairs is lucky for a subject may depend on the subject's individual characteristics, including their epistemic position. For example, the subject may lack a critical piece of information, or might value something in an unusual way that makes a state of affairs specially lucky for that individual.[186] Therefore, the pressing question is, why should we think that luck is dependent rather than intrinsic? There are two steps to how I want to address this question. First, I will make some short comments on whether moral facts are dependent and how this relates to the idea that luckiness is a dependent property. Second, I want to argue that luck is a dependent property in a way that does not depend on whether or in what way moral facts are dependent.

Are moral facts dependent facts? One reason to think so is given by Searle's "rough and ready" test for observer-relativity: "ask yourself, Could the feature exist if there had never been any human beings or other sorts of sentient beings?"[187] The answer in the case of most moral facts seems to be 'no.' However, if we consider the more precise distinction (after all, the rough and ready test really is rough), and ask whether or not moral features of the world depend on our collective intentionality, the answer is not as clear. On a number of distinct, substantial meta-

[185] See pp. 28-29.

[186] See my discussion of impersonal and personal luck, pp. 108-111.

[187] Searle, p. 11.

ethical theories, moral facts may be considered intrinsic, or dependent, or personally subjective. Giving a definitive answer to this question is beyond the scope of my project. However, I do want to make the point that I am *not* proposing that luckiness is a dependent property *only* because moral facts about what is or is not good for a subject are dependent.

So, in what way is luckiness a dependent property? For the purposes of this discussion, it might be best to start by supposing that the facts about what is or is not good for a subject are intrinsic features of the world. Working under this supposition, I propose that we should treat luckiness as a dependent property based on the attitudes seemingly motivated and justified by the characterization of a person or situation as lucky. As described in Chapter I,[188] common pre-reflective luck attributions seem to treat luckiness as a property of persons as much as a property of the state of affairs in light of which a person is lucky. Towards lucky persons we feel jealously and envy, we expect that they will express humility and gratitude for their advantages, and we avoid praising them for their lucky victories. Towards the unlucky, we feel pity and sympathy, we expect ourselves or others to try to help compensate them for their disadvantage, and we do not hold them fully responsible or blame them for their disadvantages. We feel that we should not expect or count on luck. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of the attitudes motivated and justified through our collective intentionality toward lucky people and states of affairs, but a truly exhaustive list is probably neither possible nor desirable. Absent these practices and attitudes, then, no one would be lucky.

A couple of the consequences of thinking of luck in this way are: 1) the attitudes motivated and justified by what we currently classify as lucky could be different by our having a different collective intentionality, and 2) we could (collectively) classify a different group of people and situations as lucky without changing the attitudes motivated and justified by this

[188] See p. 11-12.

classification. To illustrate these consequences, consider the following: i) a society could easily develop with different attitudes toward lucky people and states of affairs. For an easy example, we could simply consider a community that believes that luck does not undermine desert. This community might not feel any desire to help the unlucky or to treat lucky victories any differently from those resulting more clearly from effort and choice alone. In such a community, lucky victors might interpret their win as evidence of innate superiority, rather than expressing gratitude or humility. ii) Consider a pious community that believes that every uncertain venture should begin with an offering to the gods. In this community, if a person succeeds despite not making the appropriate offering, then they would probably be considered lucky to have succeeded. Even if an Olympic sprinter races against a novice, if the sprinter does not make the usual offering, in this community, she could be treated as lucky to win.

Additionally, returning to my earlier distinction regarding types and tokens of dependent properties above, I would like to point out that being lucky is a dependent property more like being money than being a cocktail party or baseball game; a five dollar bill is a five dollar bill without any particular person recognizing that fact at the time, but cocktail parties and baseball games require intentional participation. Even though the rules of what counts as lucky, unlucky, or non-lucky are not codified, whether a person is lucky or a state of affairs is lucky for someone seems to be true whether or not any particular person recognizes it. Unlike cocktail parties or baseball games, token lucky states of affairs do not require any specific kind of participation or recognition by any particular person for them to be lucky. For example, if a person is narrowly missed by a lightning bolt, we would intuitively think that she is lucky even if neither she nor anyone else were aware of the narrow miss.

So, if luck is a dependent property, as I claim, what does this mean for the truth conditions of luck propositions? If luckiness is a dependent property, then luck claims are claims that a person and state of affairs belongs in a category toward which there is a special collective intention in addition to any attitudes we hold toward the person and state of affairs in light of their intrinsic properties. This intention is one that modifies credit-giving, praising and blaming, and notions of desert; it is loosely identified with the luck attitudes in Chapter I.[189] The truth of a luck proposition will not hinge on whether or not any particular person adopts luck attitudes toward a person or state of affairs. A full luck claim that specifies that a particular subject is lucky that a specific state of affairs obtains has a definite truth value; however, luck claims are subject-sensitive in the sense that it may be true that a particular state of affairs is lucky for one subject while it is false that that state of affairs is lucky for another subject.

Since luckiness is not explicitly codified, I argue that a luck proposition will be true if and only if adopting the luck attitudes toward the target person and state of affairs is appropriate. The exact kind of 'appropriateness' at play will be explained in the next chapter; for now, I will just say that while there is a distinctly moral element to whether or not it is appropriate to adopt the luck attitudes toward a person and state of affairs, it is not only a matter of whether or not the person deserves to have our attitudes about them adjusted; it must be appropriate to adjust our attitudes specifically because of their relationship to a state of affairs that lines up with a particular established (but uncodified) practice of modifying our attitudes in light of a person's luckiness or unluckiness. As I spell out in the next chapter, for a luck proposition to be true, the target person and state of affairs needs to actually exemplify a type (the token person and state of affairs do not need to seem to be lucky, since no active participation is required) that seems to be lucky (that is, the person and state of affairs need to match an existing practice of adopting luck

[189] See pp. 19-21.

attitudes) without other features (I will call these conditions for ordinariness) of the person and state of affairs undermining the appropriateness of adopting luck attitudes toward the person and state of affairs.

In summary, the approach I am suggesting runs as follows: first, we should treat luck as a dependent property which applies primarily to persons in light of their relationship to a particular state of affairs. Being classified as lucky carries additional status beyond the status that is supported by the intrinsic properties of the person or state of affairs; namely, being classified as lucky motivates and justifies certain luck attitudes toward the lucky person. Therefore, the account of luck I will propose will focus on a structured way of identifying those persons toward which (and the states of affairs in light of which) it is appropriate to hold these luck attitudes. Before presenting my account, however, I will briefly discuss the alternative approach which I believe is dominant in contemporary philosophical literature on luck, the matter of luck approach.

5. The Matter of Luck Approach

Often, philosophers writing about luck do not explicitly engage with the question of whether or not luck is an intrinsic feature of the world. My treatment of luck as a dependent property leads me to identify cases of luck according to their agreement with an established practice of modifying attitudes. This is a departure from what I see as the most dominant approach to theorizing about luck, which I am calling the matter of luck approach (MOL). As we may recall from Chapter II, many discussions of luck try to pick out luck with reference to other only roughly-defined concepts, such as accident or control. These, along with accounts based on probability and some of the more developed accounts (like those proposed by Pritchard, Riggs and Rescher) seem to approach theorizing about luck in a common way. MOL can be

roughly characterized as follows: 'matters of luck' picks out a certain type of state of affairs. These states of affairs can be identified without knowledge of the state of affairs being advantageous or disadvantageous for any subject. Following MOL, luckiness is primarily a property of states of affairs (in contrast to my account, which will treat luckiness primarily as a property of persons); if a person is lucky it is only because they are the beneficiary of a state of affairs of the appropriate type, and if a person is unlucky it is only because they are a maleficiary of a state of affairs of that same type. On the most radical reading, luck appears as a property of persons only in a derivative sense; more moderately, the MOL theorist looks to do the bulk of the work of identifying luck cases by identifying states of affairs of the appropriate type, and declares each an actual case of good luck if a person benefits from it and a case of bad luck if a person suffers from it. Even if these accounts are able to identify the correct set of people and situations as lucky, I believe that this kind of account cuts at the wrong level. At best, these accounts merely provide conceptual shorthand for identifying lucky states of affairs. At worst, these accounts prescribe a confused landscape of luck that does not align with existing practices (of modifying our attitudes) surrounding luck claims.

An MOL theorist might begin her inquiry by noticing similarities between seemingly simple luck cases. Perhaps they notice something common to situations influenced by coin flips, die rolls, and lotteries. The MOL theorist then makes an effort to characterize those situations, perhaps in terms of low probability, indeterminacy, or something more complicated and developed like Pritchard's modal account.[190] Finally, supposing a moderate MOL theorist, she will then use this characterization to circumscribe a group of matters of luck and identify actual cases of luck only when a subject benefits or suffers from a matter of luck. This approach is appealing because characterizing matters of luck based on probability, indeterminacy, et cetera at

[190] See pp. 55-68 for my discussion of this account.

least prima facie explains the basic intuitive connection between these concepts and luck. Further, in many intuitive cases of luck (such as those involving die rolls, flipped coins, or lotteries) we do seem able to anticipate that it would be lucky if someone were to benefit from the situation (perhaps by placing a bet on it).

On the surface, the MOL theorist is going to have difficulty defending why certain cases of luck are canonical and therefore have features that can be generalized to identify the type 'matters of luck,' while other cases only arise as potential luck cases due to someone's conceptual confusion. To take just a few examples, consider what characterization might capture the following three intuitively simple luck claims:

1. John is lucky to win the lottery.
2. I am lucky to have such a loving family.
3. Mary is lucky to be so beautiful.

The challenge for the MOL theorist is to characterize the type 'matters of luck' in a way that captures all and only intuitive cases of luck. Alternatively, the MOL theorist can argue that many of our intuitive judgments are error-laden. Often, MOL theorists will end up dismissing those intuitive examples that do not match their characterization of 'matters of luck' as a case of conceptual confusion. Most famously, perhaps, Rescher makes a sharp distinction between cases of luck and cases were a subject is "merely fortunate,"[191] but the distinction is not based on intuitive conceptual differences between luckiness and fortunateness. Instead, the category of "merely fortunate" cases, which includes cases of constitutive luck,[192] for example, is simply

[191] Rescher, Nicholas. *Luck: The Brilliant Randomness of Everyday Life.* University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995.

[192] Constitutive luck cases are cases where a person is lucky to have certain personal traits, such as beauty, intelligence, nationality, or health.

identified as those cases where we might intuitively make luck claims, but that do not fit into his prescribed category of 'matters of luck,' defined in terms of impredictability.

To take an example, consider the following states of affairs where, intuitively, a subject could benefit in either a lucky or non-lucky way. Imagine that an explorer is captured by a tribe of superstitious headhunters. And suppose that a solar eclipse happens at just the right moment to frighten the explorer's captors, allowing him to escape.[193] The MOL theorist is compelled to decide whether the situation of a solar eclipse frightening a group of headhunters counts as a matter of luck, and then, the case will emerge clearly as a case of luck or non-luck for the explorer as he has clearly benefitted from it. In this case, it is not clear to me whether we would intuitively want to characterize the eclipse as a matter of luck, but for the sake of argument I will suppose that we do. However, what if we consider two possible explorers that might find themselves in this situation. New Jersey Smith is something of a bungler and is rescued by the eclipse unexpectedly. In contrast, Indiana Jones carefully planned his expedition and only entered the jungle at this particular time because he knew that an eclipse would occur and that the superstitious headhunters would be frightened enough for him to make an escape in the event that he were captured. Intuitively, at least, Indiana Jones is not lucky to be rescued, but New Jersey Smith is. As I will describe in the next chapter, this is because being rescued from superstitious headhunters by a timely eclipse is extraordinary (and therefore lucky) when it is not planned for but ordinary (and therefore non-lucky) when it is planned for.

To illustrate how MOL accounts 'cut at the wrong level,' let's explore how one might try to accommodate prima facie counterexamples into a typical low-probability based account of luck. Suppose that we start with roughly the following: 'A state of affairs is lucky for a person if

[193] This is a modified version of the Gentleman adventurers example from p.71.

it is significant for that person and the state of affairs is the result of a low probability event.'

The immediate prima facie counter examples that come to mind are:[194]

1. Even odds: Adam is lucky to win a flip of a fair coin.
2. Constitutive luck: Betsy is lucky to be a citizen of a affluent democratic country.
3. High probability luck: Carl is lucky to survive his turn at Russian Roulette.
4. High probability constitutive luck: Dana is lucky to not have been born blind.
5. No clear probability: Eric is lucky to make it home safely, even though he was driving while drunk.

For each of these cases, the proponent of the probability account (hereafter, 'probability theorist') might offer reinterpretations along the following lines:

1. Even odds: Although it is not clear that 50% is, intuitively, a low probability, and drawing a hard line somewhere between 50% and 51% might seem to lead to a sorites paradox, the probability theorist can simply bite the bullet and accept the vagueness of 'luck' and 'low probability' as concepts. It may be a virtue that the vagueness of one is reflected in the other.
2. Constitutive luck: Although it may not appear, on the surface, that Betsy's being a citizen of an affluent democratic country is the result of a low probability event, we can offer an interpretation in terms of low probability along the following lines: since more people are not citizens of affluent-and-democratic countries than are citizens of affluent-and-democratic countries, there is a low probability that a single randomly selected person is a citizen of a affluent-and-democratic country. In this sense, there is a low probability of any particular person (Betsy included) being a citizen of a affluent-and-democratic country.

[194] These same examples were first discussed on pp. 45-48.

3. High probability luck: Although Carl is intuitively lucky to survive a round of Russian Roulette, this may not actually be in light of the probability of his pulling the trigger on an unloaded chamber. Instead, the probability theorist may argue that the luck involved in inherited from the comparative probability of surviving if he engages in a game of Russian Roulette versus the probability of surviving if he does not engage is the game. Carl appears lucky because he has engaged in a course of action that causes the probability of the advantageous outcome (not dying suddenly) to be dramatically lower than otherwise.

4. High probability constitutive luck: Dana's case, I think, is the most difficult kind of case for the probability theorist to explain. They can start by comparing Dana to the entire global population, as in the case of Betsy's constitutive luck, but most people are not born blind. The explanation offered for Carl's high probability luck will not work here, since Dana hasn't done anything to make herself more likely to be born blind. However, this is also the kind of case where I think the probability theorist has the strongest reasons for claiming that our intuitive, pre-reflective use of 'luck' is simply in error. Since not being born blind really is the normal case (and doesn't seem to satisfy the *unreliability criterion*),[195] the probability theorist is probably happy claiming that Dana is not, in fact, lucky, and the claim that she is lucky involves confusing 'luckiness' with mere 'fortunateness' or another similar concept.

5. No clear probability: In cases of recklessness where we do not have an intuitive sense of the probabilities involved (or how we might go about measuring them), the probability theorist can respond in a similar manner as the case of high probability luck. Eric appears lucky because he has engaged in a course of action that causes the probability of

[195] See p.8.

the advantageous outcome (driving home safely), whatever that probability might be, to be dramatically lower than otherwise.

There are two ways in which I find the probability theorist's responses to these kinds of examples unsatisfying. First, it is not always clear when to employ this machinery to make intuitive cases of luck fit the proposed account. Why is it that 'high probability' cases like 3 above should be reinterpreted as cases of low comparative probability, while cases like a master archer shooting against a novice without warming up[196] do not get this treatment? Second, and more importantly, employing this kind of conceptual machinery does not seem to get at what I am most concerned about when looking for a unified account of luck. While accommodating all cases of luck under the heading 'low probability' might be useful conceptual shorthand, it does not capture what it is about these cases that motivates, and typically justifies, the luck attitudes we hold toward them.

6. Conclusion

The account of luck that I will offer in the next chapter deviates from contemporary ways of theorizing about luck in a few ways. First, in light of my discussion earlier in this chapter regarding luckiness as a dependent property, my account is motivated by a desire to treat the existing practices and attitudes surrounding luck as instructive; in all cases of luck, it must be, in a certain sense, appropriate for observers to adopt a set of luck attitudes. As far as possible, I want to avoid offering an account on which most or too many everyday luck claims turn out to be erroneous or cases of conceptual confusion. Second, as I discussed at length in Chapter III, my preferred approach to theorizing about luck focuses first on the kind of advantages gained (or disadvantages suffered) by lucky subjects. So, unlike MOL, rather than starting with a space of

[196] Here, I take it for granted that the master archer is not lucky to win against the novice, even though he has reduced his chances by not warming up.

all states of affairs and trying to identify the luck-apt ones, I want to start by looking at subjects' advantages and disadvantages and ask, under what conditions are they considered lucky to have those advantages or unlucky to have those disadvantages? As we saw in the previous chapter, what counts as good for a subject may vary according to a person's ethical and metaethical commitments, and it is certainly preferable to have one's ethics inform his theory of luck rather than the other way around. The advantage-based approach is desirable because, on the surface at least, it seems to do justice to wide variety of luck claims and cases that we intuitively accept. Finally, motivated by the observation that luckiness involves abnormality, as described in the unreliability criterion, the account I offer will seek to define luckiness negatively; that is, I will identify what counts as a normal way of obtaining an advantage and identify luck in those cases where the advantage is *not* obtained in the normal way.

Chapter V: The Advantage-Based Account

1. Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to present my original account of luck motivated by my discussions of impersonal and personal advantages and the limitations of the MOL approach addressed in previous chapters. My account is advantage-based; that is, I propose an account on which we cannot determine whether or not a person or state of affairs is lucky or unlucky without referring to the particular kind and degree of advantage or disadvantage that the person has gained. On my account, advantages and disadvantages admit of a certain kind of justification; roughly, there are certain conditions that justify advantages and disadvantages for particular subjects in the sense that, if those conditions are met, we react to their having that advantage or disadvantage in the ordinary way. If these conditions are met, I'll say that the subject's having that advantage or disadvantage is ordinary; a subject's having an advantage or disadvantage will be extraordinary only if none of the conditions for ordinariness are met. A subject will be lucky if and only if it is extraordinary that they have an advantage. Before I lay out my proposal, I want to reintroduce some main findings from earlier chapters to show the motivations for the ways my account diverges from traditional accounts of luck.

In my previous chapters, I argued for the following constraints on a plausible account of luck.

I. Ordinary Usage Constraint: An account of luck must capture the significance and unreliability of lucky and unlucky states of affairs.

II. Significance Criterion: There is no luck, either good or bad, if no person is positively or negatively affected.

On my account, significance is understood in terms of moral facts about the advantages and disadvantages possessed by the subjects of a luck claim. These facts will be the starting point of my account, which is a considerably different approach than some other accounts already discussed.

III. Kind of Significance Constraint: An account of luck should provide a way of distinguishing between benefits that apply generally to all subjects and benefits that apply only to particular subjects, idiosyncratically.

In giving the significance criterion a central role in developing my account, I make a distinction between impersonal luck (roughly, states of affairs that are advantageous for any subject) and personal luck (roughly, states of affairs that are advantageous only in light of particular subjects' characteristics). In section 2 of this chapter, I will present a more careful treatment of this distinction.

IV. Unreliability Criterion: Luck is unreliable; luck always involves the idea that something is unusual, abnormal, or unexpected.

The unreliability criterion suggests that one facet of luck should (or at least, can) be defined negatively; I will do this by presenting an account of what it is for an advantage or disadvantage to be ordinarily acquired and then claim that all lucky advantages or unlucky disadvantages are extraordinarily acquired.

V. Metaphysical Constraint: An account of luck must characterize the kind of property ‘lucky’ is.

On my account, 'lucky' is a uncodified, dependent property; that is, luckiness is a property that only emerges in light of certain social and institutional practices (in contrast to being an intrinsic property or a personally subjective one), but it is not explicitly defined by any authority.

VI. Attitudinal Constraint: An account of luck must provide some explanation for the attitudes that are typically involved in evaluating things as lucky or unlucky.

The luck attitudes are special attitudes we tend to adopt toward ourselves and others when we believe that we or they are lucky or unlucky. These involve modification to the attitudes we would adopt if we did not believe that the relevant subject was lucky or unlucky. In light of my treatment of the metaphysical constraint, the luck attitudes will play a central role in my account. Since I treat luckiness as a dependent property, the relevant practice that I think should be used to define luck is the practice of adopting these luck attitudes. The account I now introduce is focused on describing when people tend to (and, in an attenuated way, prescribing when people ought to) adopt the luck attitudes by connecting this practice to the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary advantages.

2. Introducing the Advantage-Based Approach

As was frequently addressed in previous chapters, my preferred approach to theorizing about luck seeks to avoid the matter of luck approach (MOL) by focusing mainly on the advantages and disadvantages gained by lucky subjects before considering the states of affairs that involve these advantages or disadvantages. So, unlike MOL, rather than starting with a space of all states of affairs and trying to identify the luck-apt ones, I want to start by looking at all the advantages and disadvantages subjects are privy to, and ask under what conditions are they considered lucky or unlucky to have those advantages or disadvantages. As discussed in Chapter III, what counts as an advantage for a subject may vary according to a person's ethical and metaethical commitments, and it is certainly preferable to have one's ethics inform his or her theory of luck, rather than the other way around. This is a desirable approach because, on the surface at least, it seems to do justice to wide variety of luck claims and cases that we intuitively

accept. I also find the advantage-based approach preferable to MOL because I believe that MOL theorists are making an error when they try to identify cases of luck without reference to the practices (luck attitudes) that characterize them.

As described in Chapter I,[197] luck attributions most often matter to us when they lead us to adopt modified attitudes that I have been calling luck attitudes. This includes praising and blaming in situations where we otherwise would not, expecting graciousness and generosity from lucky winners, and offering support and condolences to unlucky sufferers. Also included are similar attitudes such as resentment at having lost to a lucky winner in a competition or embarrassment at one's own succeeding through luck. Another interesting space to explore is found in everyday disagreements about luck claims. I have in mind situations were two parties disagree on whether one of them (or a third party) is lucky. What kind of reasons are proposed to bolster or undermine someone's claim that a subject is lucky? In games and sports, it is common for one party to make a luck claim that the other rejects. Presumably, this is because the luck claim, if true,[198] would somehow undermine the successful party's achievement in the game or sport. So what kind of reasons do the two parties offer for or against the luck claim? The victorious party might point to his careful positioning or the effort he expended, while the accusatory party makes observations about the improbability of the result, the insufficiency of the victorious party's efforts to ensure that result, or unusual environmental factors that might have affected the outcome. As we will see a little later in this chapter, I take these kinds of reasons as instructive, and the kinds of reasons often offered and accepted during disagreements about luck will be reflected in the conditions for ordinariness I describe.

[197] See pp. 19-21.

[198] More precisely, "if its counterpart proposition were true."

3. Developing the Advantage-Based Approach: Subjects, Propositions, and Advantages

In this section, I want to propose a detailed account of luck following the advantage-based approach, incorporating the material from the preceding chapters. I start roughly here:

(L) S is lucky that P if and only if P involves an advantage, A, for S, and S's having A is extraordinary.

Certainly more explanation is needed. What it means for some proposition to involve an advantage for a subject was introduced briefly in Chapter III. As established there, I use 'A is good for S' and 'S has (or possesses) advantage, A,' interchangeably for the sake of grammatical ease. In short, P involves an advantage for S whenever P involves something that can be rightly said to be *good for* S. Of course, what counts as good for a subject will vary according to the reader's ethical and metaethical commitments.

If we let $\boldsymbol{W}$ be the set of possible worlds described by P, then we can move to:

(ADV) P involves an advantage, A, for S if and only if in all members of $\boldsymbol{W}$, S has A.

As in previous chapters, I will describe my account in terms of possible worlds, but nothing of substance will hinge on any metaphysical commitments regarding the reality of possible worlds. To be more precise in considering identity across possible worlds, some might prefer that I write in terms of S's counterparts (i.e. 'P involves an advantage, A, for S if and only if in all members of $\boldsymbol{W}$, S's counterpart has A'), but I think that this language would be unnecessarily cumbersome and ultimately unimportant for my purposes; I will treat individual subjects as if they simultaneously exist in multiple possible worlds. Similarly, I will treat advantages as if a subject can possess the very same advantage in different possible worlds.

From ADV we can immediately see that, for P to involve an advantage for S, P must be in some way *about* S. Even if P describes something that S benefits from in the actual world, if

P is not about S, then there will be possible worlds described by P where S does not benefit. For example, suppose that Sally has purchased a lottery ticket with the numbers 2, 11, 17, 35 and 39. The proposition 'the numbers 2, 11, 17, 35, and 39 were drawn for the lottery' would then describe part of the actual world that is beneficial for Sally; Sally has the advantage of having a lottery ticket that matches those winning numbers. However, this proposition does not involve an advantage for Sally because there are possible worlds where the numbers 2, 11, 17, 35, and 39 were drawn for the lottery where Sally does not have the advantage of having a lottery ticket that matches the winning numbers. However, the more specific proposition 'the numbers 2, 11, 17, 35, and 39 were drawn for the lottery *and* Sally has purchased a lottery ticket with the numbers 2, 11, 17, 35 and 39' does involve an advantage for Sally. Similarly, the propositions 'the lottery numbers drawn match the numbers on Sally's ticket' or 'Sally won the lottery' each also involve an advantage for Sally. I think that this restriction on the kind of propositions that can involve advantages does justice to the idea that luck claims typically involve implicit information about the relationship between a state of affairs and a subject's interests.[199]

Next, as we saw in Chapter III,[200] I make a distinction between impersonal and personal luck. We start with a proposition, P, that involves an advantage for a subject, S. Then, let P` be the proposition we get if we substitute a subject, S`, for S in P. This substitution should be clearly possible since, as just discussed, P must be a proposition that is, in some way, about S. For example, if P is 'S won the lottery,' then P` will be ' S` won the lottery.' Then, if we let $\boldsymbol{S} = \{S_1, S_2, \ldots S_n \ldots\}$ be the set of all subjects of the same kind as S, and let $P_S = \{P_1, P_2, \ldots P_n \ldots\}$ be the set of propositions generated by substituting the corresponding members of $\boldsymbol{S}$ for S in P, then:

[199] See p. 24.

[200] See pp. 108-111.

(IA) P involves an impersonal advantage, A, for S if and only if for some ***S*** of which S is a member, P_n involves A for S_n, for every member, S_n, of ***S***.

(PA) P involves a personal advantage, A, for S if and only if for some ***S*** of which S is a member, P_n does not involve A for S_n, for some member, S_n, of ***S***.

So, I will branch L into:

(L_I) S is impersonally lucky that P if and only if P involves an impersonal advantage, A, for S, and S's having A is extraordinary.

(L_P) S is personally lucky that P if and only if P involves a personal advantage, A, for S, and S's having A is extraordinary.

Additionally, although I take the form 'S is lucky that P' to be canonical, I also offer two common derivative notions. First, we get an immediate treatment of how to understand claims that a person is lucky.

(L') S is lucky if and only if there is a relevant P such that S is lucky that P.

Next, we want to address statements such as "winning the lottery is lucky," or "finding buried treasure is lucky" that ascribe luckiness to a kind of action or process. Prima facie, many of these claims should turn out to be true on any account of luck. However, since my account defines luck in terms of propositions, subjects, and advantages, I need to take a indirect approach to accommodating them. I propose that these claims characterize a certain predicate as lucky (for example, "winning the lottery is lucky" characterizes the predicate 'won the lottery' as lucky). Further, for every subject, we can generate a proposition by saturating the predicate with the subject (for example, we can saturate the predicate 'won the lottery' with the subject 'Alan' to get the proposition 'Alan won the lottery'). So, we get:

Q is a kind of action or process, and

q(x) is the predicate characterized by Q, then

(L") Q is lucky if and only if for any S, S is impersonally lucky that q(S).

Finally, to cover cases of bad luck:

(U) S is unlucky that P if and only if P involves a disadvantage, D, for S, and S's having D is extraordinary.

The remaining definitions for bad luck will follow directly from U by substituting 'unlucky' for 'lucky' and ‘disadvantage’ for ‘advantage’ in everything covered so far.

These definitions do justice to observations made in Chapter III; it is possible for a person to be any combination of personally lucky, impersonally lucky, personally unlucky, and impersonally unlucky at the same time (assuming accommodating meta-ethical commitments). So long as we suppose, as I do, that it is possible for some things to be good or bad for a subject without being all-things-considered good or all-things considered bad for that subject, then combinations of the following kind are possible. Suppose that Betsy finds a crate of rare bottles and gold abandoned on the side of the road. Betsy is impersonally lucky that she found the gold. Additionally, Betsy is an avid bottle collector who recognizes and appreciates the value of the rare bottles in the crate. So, she is personally lucky that she found the bottles. However, if we add that the bottles and gold are irradiated and will make Betsy ill, then she is impersonally unlucky that she found the bottles and gold. Finally, we can add that Betsy has a petty family who will resent her finding the gold and treat her poorly because of it. So, Betsy is also personally unlucky that she found the gold.

One might worry that my account leads to an unintuitive result, arguing that a subject cannot be impersonally and personally lucky relative to the same proposition, since IA specifies

that the proposition involves an advantage that would be an advantage for any subject and PA specifies that the proposition involves an advantage that would not be an advantage for at least one other subject. However, if we consider ADV carefully, we can see that my account is open to a proposition involving multiple advantages. It is possible that there is more than one advantage that a subject has in every possible world described by a proposition. In the example just given, Betsy is impersonally lucky and personally lucky that she found that crate of gold and bottles because, in every possible worlds described by 'Betsy found that crate of gold and bottles' she has two advantages, the impersonal advantage of possessing the gold and the personal advantage of possessing the bottles.

The definitions I have proposed also have some interesting implication for the logic of luck statements, which I think line up nicely with common intuitions. Suppose that 'xLy' is the relation 'x is lucky that y.' Let's consider the following:

1. $sL(p \wedge q) \vDash sLp \wedge sLq$
2. $sLp \wedge sLq \vDash sL(p \wedge q)$
3. $sLp \vDash sL(p \wedge q)$

Intuitively, we can see problems with $sL(p \wedge q) \vDash sLp \wedge sLq$. If a subject is lucky that two things are true, she may be so in light of their combination and not in light of one alone. For example, Cara might be lucky that she has a lottery ticket with particular numbers on it and that those numbers were drawn, but she is not lucky merely to have a ticket with those particular numbers, and she is not lucky merely that particular numbers were drawn. It is only the combination of the two that is advantageous for her. This is supported by the definition I have given; the set of possible worlds described by $p \wedge q$ will be smaller than the union of the set of possible worlds described by p and the set of possible worlds described by q, so it is possible for

someone to possess an extraordinary advantage in all the worlds described by $p \wedge q$ without possessing that advantage in all the worlds described by p (or in all the worlds described by q).

In contrast, $sLp \wedge sLq \vDash sL(p \wedge q)$ seems intuitively correct. If a subject is lucky in light of two different propositions, that is, if two different propositions involve an advantage for the same subject, then the (third) proposition that is a conjunction of those two propositions will also involve those advantages for the subject. If Dan is lucky that he won the lottery, and Dan is lucky that his risky investments paid off, then Dan will certainly be lucky that he won the lottery and his lucky investments paid off. This is supported by my definitions by the same reasoning as above; the set of possible worlds described by $p \wedge q$ will be smaller than the union of the set of possible worlds described by p and the set of possible worlds described by q.

Even more strongly, $sLp \vDash sL(p \wedge q)$ will hold up intuitively and using my definitions so long as your metaethics allows for advantages that are not all-things-considered advantages. If a subject is lucky to gain an advantage, the advantage cannot be cancelled out. Rather, the advantage could be accompanied by a disadvantage, such that the subject is both lucky and unlucky. For example, if Erica wins the lottery and falls into a destructive lifestyle, then she is lucky that she won the lottery, unlucky that she fell into a destructive lifestyle, and both lucky and unlucky that she won the lottery and fell into a destructive lifestyle. This is supported by my definitions again because of the same observation that the set of possible worlds described by $p \wedge q$ will be smaller than the union of the set of possible worlds described by p and the set of possible worlds described by q. Thus, if Erica possesses an advantage in all the possible worlds described by p, then she will also possess that advantage in all the worlds described by $p \wedge q$. More could be said on this subject involving the luck relation and other logical connectives, but I will save that discussion for a later project.

4. Distinguishing Ordinary and Extraordinary

In my presentation of my account so far, I have not addressed what it is that makes having an advantage or disadvantage ordinary or extraordinary. At first, it might seem odd that I am using the language of ordinary and extraordinary rather than a more familiar notion such as desert or justification. I am introducing this language in an effort to clearly distance this idea from other kinds of justification that emerge in discussions of other philosophical topics. I want to avoid confusion with other concepts such as deserved, earned, or merited, which will overlap with some but not all of the conditions for ordinariness that I have in mind. Specifically, I want it to be clear that whether having an advantage or disadvantage is ordinary is a matter of social practice; it is not a purely moral matter. Whether or not a subject is deserving of a certain advantage or disadvantage is not what I am interested in. To take a simple example, in gambling situations, switching in a weighted die or rigged deck might be enough to make a win ordinary for the cheater, but the cheater certainly does not therefore *deserve* to win. Being in certain advantageous circumstances might be underserved or unmerited if this is achieved through cheating or deception, but this does not mean that being in those circumstances is necessarily extraordinary.

Similarly, I avoid using a term like warrant that may be familiar from discussions in epistemology (roughly, in the sense of whether a belief is justified by the evidence). The conditions under which we adopt normal attitudes toward a subject's advantage or disadvantage do not neatly coincide with the conditions under which we would rationally expect them to have the advantage or disadvantage. There are moral and pragmatic considerations that can lead us to adopt ordinary attitudes toward an advantage that we would not rationally expect someone to have or to adopt modified attitudes toward an advantage that we should rationally expect

someone to have. These divergences will be highlighted as I explain the conditions for ordinariness in detail.

As discussed in the previous chapter, since luck is a dependent property, a society could easily have developed practices that count different states of affairs as lucky than ours does; that is, a society could easily develop practices that lead to different conditions for ordinariness. So, what does it mean for a subject's having some advantage or disadvantage in certain circumstances to be extraordinary? Roughly, the basic intuition is that there are certain ordinary ways of acquiring each advantage and disadvantage, and the conditions for ordinariness for that advantage or disadvantage identify those ordinary ways of acquiring them. Conventionally, a subject's ordinary acquisition of an advantage is cause for celebration or praise, while the extraordinary acquisition of an advantage engenders some amount of jealousy or incredulity.[201] On the other hand, a subject's ordinary acquisition of a disadvantage may lead to feelings of Schadenfreude or that justice has been served, while an extraordinary acquisition of a disadvantage is usually cause for sympathy or, in some cases, compensation. If no conditions for ordinariness are met, then it is extraordinary for the subject to have an advantage or disadvantage.

For example, if I meet someone who has a large sum of money, an ordinary way for them to acquire that money is through their own hard work and cleverness; I might praise and admire their industriousness. However, if I discovered that they were wealthy only because they won the money in a lottery, I would modify these attitudes and maybe even resent their fortune. Similarly, if I learn of someone who has recently been incarcerated, the ordinary case would be one where he or she had actually committed a crime, and I might feel a sense of satisfaction and

[201] I don't mean to claim that ordinariness should be conceptually understood in terms of this celebration and jealousy; rather, I take the regular occurrence of celebration and jealousy as evidence of the presence of an uncodified social convention.

safety to know that they are no longer free. However, if I learned that they were wrongly arrested because of a striking similarity to the real culprit, I would modify these attitudes and instead feel sympathy and outrage on behalf of the wrongly incarcerated person. My approach to capturing this simple intuition is to offer five ways that an advantage can be ordinarily acquired by a subject, broken into two broad categories: 1) conditions satisfied by the subject's efforts and characteristics, and 2) conditions satisfied by comparison to another set of advantages or disadvantages. I propose that an advantage or disadvantage is extraordinarily acquired if and only if it is not acquired in any of those ways.

Before presenting my proposed conditions for ordinariness directly, I want to add a note about the benefits of treating luck as an uncodified, dependent property. As Searle has pointed out, there are some benefits to forgoing codification, namely, "the flexibility, spontaneity, and informality that the practice has in its uncodified form."[202] For different communities, there might be additional or different conditions for ordinariness than the ones I am proposing. For example, in an extremely pious community, it might be the case that the level of a subject's piety is a significant condition that always overrides other considerations. I will not be trying, at this point, to specify the exact quantities needed to satisfy any of the following conditions for specific advantages and disadvantages, although I do believe those quantities should be sensitive to the degree and kind of advantage or disadvantage. I believe that exact quantities needed is an matter of empirical fact that would need to be answered experimentally if it can be precisely answered at all. However, what I hope is enduring about my account is the framework that I have introduced; while specific conditions for ordinariness and luck attitudes might be flexible and vary between communities and time periods, my account of luck involves seeing certain

[202] Searle, John R. *The Construction of Social Reality*. The Free Press, 1995, p. 88.

advantages and disadvantages as ordinarily acquired, and , when advantages or disadvantages are extraordinarily acquired, this motivates a particular set of modified attitudes.

Now, the first three ways an advantage[203] or disadvantage can be ordinarily acquired by a subject can be categorized together as conditions that can be satisfied by the subject's efforts to produce the advantage or to avoid the disadvantage. Clearly, what constitutes sufficient effort to ordinarily secure an advantage will vary according to the specific advantage. In general, the greater the advantage, the greater effort needed to ordinarily secure it. The amount of effort that ordinarily leads to receiving an average day's pay at work is much lower than the amount of effort that ordinarily leads to a payday of millions of dollars. Disadvantages will ordinarily be acquired due to an absence of sufficient effort to avoid the disadvantage. The prudential concerns that appear in discussions on moral luck enter here; normally, we expect others to go to certain lengths to avoid certain disadvantages (such as hitting pedestrians while driving), and those disadvantages are ordinarily acquired due to a subject's failure to take the appropriate precautions. Importantly, the minimum amount of effort that is sufficient to ordinarily secure an advantage will often not be enough effort to guarantee the advantage. It is enough that the subject exerts the efforts that are sufficient to produce the advantage under normal conditions. For example, a superior athlete may exert herself enough to ordinarily win a race against a novice, but it is certainly still possible (perhaps through some coincidence of strange events) that the novice will win.

This first way that an advantage or disadvantage can be ordinarily acquired through a subject's efforts appears in disagreements about luck when a person protests that they are not lucky because they have taken specific precautions to ensure their advantage. These precautions can be strategic plays or preparations, or even information gathering. To recall an example from

[203] As a reminder from Chapter III, avoiding a disadvantage also counts as possessing an advantage, and vice versa.

Chapter II,[204] Indiana Jones's escape from the headhunters is ordinary in a way that Smith's escape is not, because he has planned his expedition in a way to take advantage of the eclipse as a means of escape. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, in gambling situations, switching in a rigged deck or a weighted die may be enough to ordinarily secure a win on the part of the cheater. The analog for disadvantages, then , would be if a subject suffers because he or she has failed to take certain normal precautions. For example, if I fail to put my milk back in the fridge in a timely fashion, ordinarily, my milk spoils.

The second way that an advantage or disadvantage can be ordinarily acquired through a subject's efforts is through the subject's past efforts to cultivate a skill or talent that produces the advantage. A superior athlete's win over a novice is ordinarily acquired because of the athlete's efforts to improve the physical and mental abilities relevant to their sport.[205] Accomplished poker players' wins at the tournament level are ordinarily acquired by the experience they've cultivated that allows them to make strong plays throughout the entire tournament. They might not employ skills that are strong enough to make winning any individual hand ordinary (such as rigging the deck), but their winning over the course of hundreds of hands is ordinary because of their efforts to cultivate the skills needed to continue making strong plays over an extended period of time. Here, the analog for disadvantages is fairly simple. A disadvantage of this kind would ordinarily be acquired due to weak skill or due to lack of practice. My frequently missing free throws is ordinary because of my complete lack of practice playing basketball. A disadvantage of this kind would be extraordinary if I failed despite having properly developed the appropriate skill.

[204] See the example of the Gentleman adventurers on p. 71.

[205] As I will discuss a little later, it is possible for an athlete's victories to be ordinary while her having the talent or skill that produces the victories is not.

The third way that an advantage can be ordinarily acquired due to the subject's efforts is by the advantage being of a kind that requires minimal or no effort. As mentioned above, the amount of effort needed to ordinarily acquire an advantage scales with the degree of the advantage; some advantages can ordinarily be acquired simply by being so small that little or no effort is normally required to secure them. Finding money on the street is intuitively lucky for any moderate sum; finding one hundred dollars certainly seems lucky. However, finding a dime or a nickel is not as clearly lucky; the effort needed to lean over and pick up a dime seems like sufficient effort to ordinarily lead to a gain of ten cents.

There is also a sense in which the effort needed to ordinarily acquire an advantage scales with the probability of obtaining an advantage in outcome luck situations. If an advantageous outcome is probable enough, it may be ordinarily acquired through little or no effort on the part of the subject. When a gambler claims that her win is not lucky because she made a smart bet with odds squarely in her favor, she is arguing that no effort beyond identifying and placing that bet is required to ordinarily lead to her winning. Disadvantages can be ordinarily acquired in the same fashion when the effort needed to avoid the disadvantage is unachievably high. For example, the natural death of a pet might be ordinary simply because it is unavoidable (barring the unlikely invention of an immortality serum). We may recall Rescher's formula for measuring luck from Chapter II:

$$\lambda\,(E) = \Delta\,(E) \times [1\text{-pr}(E)] = \Delta\,(E) \times \text{pr}(\text{not-}E)$$[206]

For Rescher, E represents some outcome event, $\Delta\,(E)$ represents the significance of that outcome for the relevant subject, and pr(E) represents the probability of E's occurring. The λ measure is given as a measure of the degree of luck, for Rescher, with positive values being lucky and

[206] Rescher, Nicholas. *Luck: The Brilliant Randomness of Everyday Life.* University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995, p. 211.

negative values unlucky. While I do not think that this measure is useful for comparing the degree of any two cases of luck,[207] if we imagine the λ measure as a measurement of the effort that ordinarily leads to *E*, I think this equation can help illustrate how some advantages can be ordinarily acquired by little or no effort as the λ measure approaches zero and how some disadvantages can be ordinarily acquired when the λ measure gets sufficiently high.

In addition to the conditions based on the advantaged or disadvantaged subject's effort, there are two ways that a subject can ordinarily acquire an advantage or disadvantage relative to a set of other advantages or disadvantages. First, a subject's advantage or disadvantage can be ordinary based on the subject's history in similar circumstances. For example, in a board game, a player's advantage from a very specific roll of the dice can be ordinary because of a history of extremely disadvantageous rolls or a disadvantageous roll can be ordinary because of a history of very advantageous rolls. This is the point where the terminology of ordinary and extraordinary acquisition of advantages and disadvantages is least intuitive; we should keep in mind that what is relevantly ordinary are the attitudes that are appropriate to take toward the advantage gained in these situations. This is also perhaps the clearest example of where I think the rules governing luck attributions and rational expectation do and should come apart. Although my history of failing in similar board game situations should not lead me to believe that 'I am due' or that I am more likely to succeed now, that history does and should affect the attitudes that I and others take towards my succeeding.

My claim that a subject's history can influence whether or not they are lucky may, rightfully, seem reminiscent of a classic gambler's fallacy; so, why would I endorse this view?

[207] I would argue that the only cases where the luckiness of two propositions for a subject are comparable are when one case has both a lesser or equal probability (pr(*E*)) than the other *and* a greater or equal advantage than the other. Then, the first case is clearly luckier. In comparing other kinds of cases of luck, it will not be clear how much less probable one case has to be to override the greater advantage gained in the other.

Since I am treating luck as a dependent property, the pressing question for me is, for a given situation, does it make sense to adopt the additional attitudes that come with characterizing it as lucky? When I consider the kinds of attitudes motivated and justified by the labels 'lucky' and 'unlucky,' attitudes of jealousy or sympathy and expectations of gratitude, a person's history does seem relevant. While we ought not rationally expect that a person's history of advantage or disadvantage will affect whether a new situation will actually be advantageous or disadvantageous for them, that history does affect how we ought to react when an advantage or disadvantage is realized.

The final way that a subject's advantage or disadvantage can be ordinarily acquired is relative to a set of other advantages or disadvantages held by competitors in a zero-sum contest. For example, imagine a four player board game where the rules of the game clearly establish one roll that is extremely disadvantageous. If three of the four have already, improbably, made that exact disadvantageous roll on recent turns, we would not want to adopt modified attitudes if the fourth player makes that roll as well. In this case, the fourth player would be lucky to avoid that roll, and not unlucky to make it, regardless of the actual probability.

For convenience, here are the five ways of warranting an advantage or disadvantage that I have identified, as a list:

1. An advantage is ordinarily acquired if the subject has taken specific precautions to produce the advantage; a disadvantage is ordinarily acquired if the subject has failed to take typical precautions to avoid the disadvantage.
2. An advantage is ordinarily acquired if the subject has made sufficient efforts to cultivate the skills or talents that normally lead to the advantage; a disadvantage is ordinarily

acquired if the subject has failed to cultivate the skills or talents that normally lead to avoiding the disadvantage.

3. An advantage can be ordinarily acquired in virtue of normally requiring no or minimal effort to produce it, or, in certain cases of outcome luck, an advantage or disadvantage can be ordinarily acquired by being extremely probable.
4. An advantage can be ordinarily acquired if the subject's history in similar situations is rife with disadvantages, and a disadvantage can be ordinarily acquired if the subject's history in similar situations is rife with advantages.
5. An advantage can be ordinarily acquired if the subject's competitors in a zero-sum contest have all received or all will have received a relevantly similar advantage, and a disadvantage can be ordinarily acquired if the subject's competitors in a zero-sum contest have all received or all will have received a relevantly similar disadvantage.

An advantage or disadvantage is extraordinarily acquired if and only if it is not acquired in any of these five ways.

In order to decide whether or not a particular advantage or disadvantage is ordinarily acquired, we should always start by considering the kind and degree of the advantage or disadvantage. Various things may be recognized as advantages and disadvantages according to various ethical and meta-ethical commitments, but, for most, advantages will at least include possession of certain commodities, gains in reputation, social or moral standing, and the possession of advantageous traits. For the first two kinds, we can try to get a sense of the degree of the advantage. If the advantage or disadvantage is impersonal, it will often be fairly clear how great of an advantage or disadvantage it is. If the advantage or disadvantage is personal, we might need to consider the subject's particular values to understand the degree of the advantage

or disadvantage. As discussed above, some sense of the degree of the advantage or disadvantage is needed to gauge the effort that is sufficient to warrant it. Following this, we should consider whether the advantage or disadvantage is gained or suffered by a subject with a peculiar history in similar situations or by a subject involved in a zero-sum contest.

I also want to comment on two interesting conditions for ordinariness that I have also considered, but which were not included in this account. First, we might consider the amount and kind of effort employed to produce an advantage relative to how much it is actually possible for a subject to do to secure the advantage. This concern shows up in disagreements about luck when someone claims that they have done all they could to give them the best possible chance at an advantage. For example, if we consider players in a card game like bridge, one player might win a hand due to a particularly unlikely distribution of cards in her opponents' hands. The opponents might claim that she was lucky that she won the hand, and she might protest that she played in a non-obvious way that gave her the best possible chance to win the hand. She was, in a sense, playing to her outs. If it makes sense, in cases like this, to adopt normal attitudes toward the card player's win rather than the modified luck attitudes, then this suggests a plausible condition for ordinariness not covered in my account. However, I do not think that it is appropriate to abandon the luck attitudes in cases like these; rather, I think the card player only has a claim that she should be seen as *less* lucky than someone who won a similar hand without playing in a way that put her in the position of having the best possible chance to win the hand. We should adopt less strong versions of the luck attitudes, but we should adopt them nonetheless.

The second potential condition for ordinariness that I want to comment on is that we might want to consider certain advantages ordinarily acquired relative to a salient subject or

group of subjects. What I want to address are claims like, "You are so lucky to be able to see" when a healthy-sighted person is working with the blind, or "You are lucky to have enough to eat," when working with starving populations. In these cases, it seems plausible to think that there is an additional condition for ordinariness here, or at least a constraint on conditions for ordinariness; if a group of subjects who have all applied the same effort to acquire an advantage have not all acquired that advantage, then that advantage is not ordinarily acquired by any of those subjects. However, I think that this misses an important point already implicit in my account. For groups like these, I think the important consideration is what amount and kind of effort is normally enough to secure the advantage in question. If the amount and kind of effort applied by everyone in the group meets this normal level, then those who do not acquire the advantage are unlucky. If the amount and kind of effort applied by everyone in the group does not meet this normal level, then those who do acquire the advantage are lucky. In cases where two people exert the same effort but only one gains an advantage, we should not interpret one as lucky and one as unlucky; rather, whether the effort expended justifies the advantage should be decided apart from a comparison of the two subjects. Then, we should adopt normal attitudes toward the subject that receives or fails to receive an advantage *appropriate* to the amount of effort, and we should adopt luck attitudes toward the one whose advantage or lack of advantage is *not appropriate* to the amount of effort.

5. An Analysis of Everyday Luck Claims

I would now like to employ my account in an analysis of some of the examples presented in previous chapters. I will begin by looking at what I have been calling everyday luck claims. We started with the following:

1. 'John is lucky that he won the lottery.'

2. 'John is lucky.'

3. 'Winning the lottery is lucky.'

These first three have been covered directly by my account in section 3 by L, L`, and L``. However, depending on the context, we could also interpret claim 2 as a claim that John is a generally lucky person; that is, John is someone who is lucky relative to a wide range of propositions.

4. 'Winning the lottery was lucky for John.'

5. 'John is lucky to be so tall.'

6. 'That was a lucky shot.'

7. 'That he won the lottery is lucky.'

Claims 4 and 5 can be paraphrased into the appropriate form without much difficulty:

4a. 'John is lucky that he won the lottery.'

5a. 'John is lucky that he is so tall.'

Claims 6 and 7 simply require adding implicit information that the speaker takes for granted:

6a. 'S is lucky that he made that shot,' where S is the implicit actor who took the shot.

7a. 'S is lucky that he won the lottery,' where S is the referent of 'he' in the original claim.

Having shown how we can easily translate everyday language luck claims into the standard form, 'S is lucky that P,' I would also like to use my account of ordinariness to offer analysis of some of the more complicated luck claims discussed in previous chapters.

For this analysis, let's begin with the following claims:

8. 'John is lucky that he won the lottery.'

9. 'John is lucky that he made that shot.'

10. 'John is unlucky to have narrowly missed that shot.'

11. 'John is lucky to be so tall.'
12. 'Adam is lucky to win a flip of a fair coin.'
13. 'Carl is lucky to survive his turn at Russian Roulette.'
14. 'Dana is lucky to make it home safely, even though she was driving while drunk.'

Starting with claim 8, we have John winning the lottery, a pretty standard case of luck. The advantage John gains is a monetary commodity and is presumably very large. Additionally, lottery wins are perhaps the clearest cases of impersonal luck, as the rules of the drawing explicitly define what constitutes winning and characterizes it as the best possible outcome. All the normal attitudes directed toward lucky persons and situations apply here; it is appropriate to be envious of John's prize and to expect gratitude and humility from him.

Next, let's move to the more interesting claim 9. It is not clear what exactly John gains from having made this shot (or even what it is that he is shooting), but we can easily imagine that he has won some contest. The degree of this advantage is not clear, but, if the claim is true, then John has won something of value, either some commodity after having bet on the contest, or just the social advantage (and associated pride) of having won. However, the claim might be made specifically to undermine the social currency that John acquires through his victory, as this is one of the natural attitudes motivated and justified by characterizing his victory as lucky. The luck involved is impersonal, as the rules to any contest typically define victory as the most desirable outcome. If this claim is true, then i) John has not done anything significant to produce the desired shot, ii) he has not cultivated the appropriate skills to justify his making such a shot, and iii) his opponents have not each enjoyed a similar advantage in the course of the contest. If any of these three things did happen, John could reasonably offer them as reasons to undermine the claim that he was lucky; his efforts or cultivated skills would be a reason to adopt normal

attitudes and to praise John, while his opponent's having a similar advantage (of making a shot not justified by effort or cultivated skills) would be a reason to think that John's winning as a consequence of this shot is not enough to motivate adopting modified attitudes toward his win.

In contrast, regarding claim 10, John's missing (and presumably, therefore losing) is extraordinary because, presumably, John has exerted the appropriate effort or developed the appropriate skills to have made the shot. The nearness to his desired target is taken as evidence of his having developed the appropriate skills or exerted the necessary effort. This claim might easily be undermined with additional information; for example, if this is the nearest shot that John has made all night, then perhaps we should think that this result actually is indicative of his skills or efforts.

Claim number 11 addresses what is often referred to as constitutive luck. The specific claim, that John is lucky that he is tall, may be personal or impersonal (or both). It may be an observation made about how being taller (at least for American men) up to a point, is socially advantageous. It may also be personal, to the extent that John enjoys being tall or participates in hobbies (such as basketball) where his height provides an advantage. In any case, so long as being tall is actually advantageous for John, it seems that there is no way that his being tall could be ordinarily acquired through effort, outside of some kind of radical surgery. In cases of constitutive luck, there is no way John could have put forth sufficient effort to be born with the genes that lead to his being tall, and he cannot cultivate his genetic traits as he could a skill or talent.

The twelfth claim is particularly interesting. Let's assume that Adam has placed a wager on the flip of coin that he has just won, so that the advantage gained is impersonal and a commodity. Also, let's assume that the coin flipped is fair, Adam has not cultivated any special

talent at flipping coins, the coin flip is not part of a larger game of many flips, and Adam has no history of flipping coins for money. Whether or not winning a coin flip is ordinary seems to vary with the stakes involved in the normal way. However, there is an interesting absence of intuitive symmetry between lucky coin flips and unlucky coin flips. For very large wagered sums, winning a coin flip is intuitively lucky and losing is intuitively non-lucky. The win or loss is extraordinary because of the bettor's lack of prudence in risking such a great sum on the flip of a coin. For very small wagered amounts, there is no luck involved in a win or a loss, as betting on a fifty percent chance of success seems sufficient to normally produce a gain or loss of a very small amount. For middling amounts of money, intuitions and opinions may rightly vary. In terms of attitudes, it may or may not seem appropriate to envy and expect gratitude from the winner of, let's say, twenty dollars, and it similarly may or may not be appropriate to offer sympathy or attempt to compensate the loser. This is one of the cases where I think the useful vagueness and flexibility of practices surrounding luck becomes prominent, as these intuitions seem to mirror common risk-averse behavior.

I would like to discuss the final two claims together (numbers 13 and 14), because they help illustrate how my account leads us away from an understanding of luck based primarily in probability. In both cases, Carl and Dana are lucky even though the advantage they gain is highly probable (or, at least, more probable than not). Carl's survival of a round of Russian Roulette is extraordinary because the minimum amount of effort needed to secure his survival is merely that he not participate in the game. Similarly, the effort Dana is expected to expend in getting home safely should at least cover being sober while driving or avoiding driving if she is drunk. In both cases, the luck attitudes that are motivated by Carl and Dana's advantages seem justified by their apparent recklessness. It is a virtue of my account that there is room to expect

gratitude and humility from Carl and Dana in the same way we might expect it from John and Adam, even though the prima facie probability of their gaining their respective advantages are dramatically different.

6. An Analysis of Challenging Cases

Finally, I want to return to some of the difficult cases presented in Chapter II in my discussion of other contemporary theories of luck. First, let's consider the case of the secret benefactor, suggested by Nicholas Rescher:

> Secret benefactor: Suppose that Seth is an eccentric, wealthy individual who intends to send a check for a large sum of money to his nephew, Tobias on his twenty second birthday. However, Seth and Tobias have never met, and Tobias has no way of knowing about his wealthy uncle. When Seth does send the money to Tobias, he does so by mailing a check with no information that would allow Tobias to ascertain where the money came from.[208]

How should we approach this case using the advantage-based theory of luck? First, we need to identify the relevant claim or claims up for evaluation. So, we ask whether Tobias is lucky that he received this money from Seth. The advantage involved is clear (the money) and so we next ask whether or not his receiving this money is extraordinary. Tobias has not done anything to produce the advantage, it is not the product of his cultivated skills or talents, and the supposedly large sum of money is not the kind of thing that normally requires very little effort to acquire. There is also no relevant history or zero-sum contest to consider. Therefore, Tobias is lucky that he receives the money; this is a very intuitive result.

[208] Rescher does not offer a detailed description of the secret benefactor case; I have taken the liberty of adding small details to his description, such as names for the involved parties, to facilitate the following discussion. Rescher, 1995, p.35.

A very similar analysis will apply to Lackey's modally robust case of finding buried treasure:

> Buried treasure: Sophie, knowing that she had very little time left to live, wanted to bury a chest filled with all of her earthly treasures on the island she inhabited. As she walked around trying to determine the best site for proper burial, her central criteria were, first, that a suitable location must be on the northwest corner of the island—where she had spent many of her fondest moments in life—and, second, that it had to be a spot where rose bushes could flourish—since these were her favorite flowers. As it happens, there was only one particular patch of land on the northwest corner of the island where the soil was rich enough for roses to thrive. Sophie, being excellent at detecting such soil, immediately located this patch of land and buried her treasure, along with seeds for future roses to bloom, in the one and only spot that fulfilled her two criteria. One month later, Vincent, a distant neighbor of Sophie's, was driving in the northwest corner of the island—which was also his most beloved place to visit—and was looking for a place to plant a rose bush in memory of his mother who had died ten years earlier—since these were her favorite flowers. Being excellent at detecting the proper soil for rose bushes to thrive, he immediately located the same patch of land that Sophie had found one month earlier. As he began digging a hole for the bush, he was astonished to discover a buried treasure in the ground.[209]

The first task is to identify the relevant claim and advantage. So, we ask, is Vincent lucky that he found this buried treasure? Again, the advantage is clear, so we turn to the question of whether or not his acquisition of the treasure is extraordinary. As in the case of the secret benefactor, Vincent has not done anything to produce the specific advantage, it is not the product of his cultivated skills or talents, and the treasure is not the kind of thing that normally requires very little effort to acquire. There is also no relevant history or zero-sum contest to consider. Therefore, Vincent is lucky that he acquires the treasure; again, it is a very intuitive result. The details about Sophie and her motivation for burying the treasure do not factor into our evaluation; they are deliberately irrelevant.[210]

Another relatively clear analysis can be given for Riggs's example of the Gentleman adventurers:

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[209] Lackey, Jennifer. "What Luck is Not." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 86.2 (2008), p. 261.

[210] Recall Lackey's method for constructing counterexamples to modal accounts of luck, on p.64, ft. 98.

> Gentleman adventurers: Consider two gentlemen adventurers, Indiana Jones and New Jersey Smith. Suppose that Jones and Smith are adventuring in an exotic locale filled with local tribes that engage in some unfamiliar customs. These tribes all worship the sun as a god, and see an eclipse as a sign of the sun god's disfavor with whatever they are doing at that moment. Jones and Smith are captured by some of these tribe members, but then are set free when a solar eclipse happens moments after their capture. Jones has consulted his almanac before starting the expedition and planned in such a way that, if they were captured, the eclipse would present an opportunity for them to escape. Smith has not done any such planning, and is completely surprised by the eclipse. [211]

For this case, the task is to explain the difference between Jones and Smith; intuitively, it seems that Jones is not lucky that he escaped and Smith is lucky that he escaped. The advantage gained (survival and escape) is clear and identical for both. However, Jones has planned and prepared to use the eclipse to escape (in the event of their capture). Preparing a means of escape (by consulting his almanac and being informed about the habits of the local tribe) seems to be exactly what is ordinarily required to produce an escape. Therefore, his having this advantage is ordinary and he is not lucky. In contrast, Smith has not taken any such precautions and therefore his escape is extraordinary (as it does not satisfy any of the other conditions for ordinariness either); Smith is lucky that he escaped.

Finally, I want to turn to Riggs's example of Smarty the valedictorian and Lackey's example of the Demolition worker to show how my account will handle cases of 'double luck.' Unlike the previous three examples, the advantage in this case will not be as clear cut.

> Smarty the valedictorian: Smarty is the valedictorian of her high school class who is about to take her computer delivered college entrance exams. Despite her formidable intelligence, she decides to prepare for the upcoming exam by studying diligently and taking many practice exams. The night before the exam, she gets a good night's sleep, and awakens fresh, sharp, and ready to excel. She takes the exam and scores very highly. Unbeknownst to Smarty, however, a fiendishly clever hacker with debilitating test anxiety had decided prior to the exam to wreak vengeance on all the clever students about to take it. Driven mad by his inability to get into a good college because of his poor test scores, he has vowed that all those smarty-pants test-takers will suffer just as he has had

[211] My presentation of this case is an abbreviated version of Riggs's much lengthier treatment. See Riggs, Wayne. "Luck, Knowledge and Control." *Epistemic Value*. Eds. A. Haddock, A. Millar, and D. H. Pritchard. Oxford University Press, 2009a, pp. 219-222 for his full description and discussion of the case.

> to suffer. He compiles a list of all the high school valedictorians for that year, and hacks into the exam program. For the valedictorians, he replaces the usual questions with questions from an advanced college physics exam. As it happens, he accidentally skips Smarty's name on the list (despite being very careful not to miss anybody), and so she gets the usual questions. As a result, she is the only valedictorian who did well on the exam.[212]
>
> Demolition worker: Ramona is a demolition worker, about to press a button that will blow up an old abandoned warehouse, thereby completing a project that she and her co-workers have been working on for several weeks. Unbeknownst to her, however, a mouse had chewed through the relevant wires in the construction office an hour earlier, severing the connection between the button and the explosives. But as Ramona is about to press the button, her co-worker hangs his jacket on a nail in the precise location of the severed wires, which radically deviates from his usual routine of hanging his clothes in the office closet. As it happens, the hanger on which the jacket is hanging is made of metal, and it enables the electrical current to pass through the damaged wires just as Ramona presses the button and demolishes the warehouse.[213]

The first difficulty that arises in these cases is that multiple advantages and disadvantages seem to be involved. Smarty has the advantage of doing well on the exam, but she also has the advantage of her exam not being sabotaged and the disadvantage of her taking an exam that the hacker has decided to sabotage. Similarly, Ramona has the advantage of her successfully demolishing the building, the disadvantage of a mouse chewing through her wire, and the advantage of her coworker reconnecting the wire by hanging his jacket.

My account is able to provide a very nuanced analysis of cases like these. Consider the following claims:

1. Smarty is lucky that she did well on her exam.
2. Smarty is lucky that the hacker did not sabotage her exam.
3. Smarty is unlucky that she took an exam that a hacker decided to sabotage.
4. Ramona is lucky that she successfully demolished the building.
5. Ramona is unlucky that a mouse chewed through her wire.

[212] Riggs, 2009a, pp. 211-212.

[213] Lackey, p. 258.

6. Ramona is lucky that a coworker reconnected her wire by hanging his jacket.

Now, claims 2, 3, 5, and 6 do not need much discussion, as they are all clearly true. The difficulty of these cases arises when we are asked to evaluate claims 1 and 4 in light of these complications. So, starting with claim 1, we ask whether or not 'Smarty did well on her exam' involves an advantage for Smarty. The answer seems to be clearly yes, as in every possible world where Smarty does well on her exam she has the advantage of doing well on her exam. Now, is it extraordinary that she does so? On my account, we should say that Smarty, in light of her preparation and intelligence, has done what is normally required to do well on such an exam, and therefore her doing well is ordinary. She is not lucky that she did well on her exam. However, what if we consider more specific propositions?

7. Smarty is lucky that she did well on her exam that a hacker intended to sabotage.
8. Smarty is lucky that she did well on her exam that a hacker intended to sabotage, but failed to sabotage.

Smarty's preparation is not sufficient to ordinarily do well on an exam that a hacker intends to sabotage (after all, in most cases where a hacker intends to sabotage her exam, it will in fact be sabotaged) so she is lucky with respect to claim 7. But again, her preparation is sufficient to ordinarily do well on an exam that a hacker intends to sabotage, and yet fails to sabotage. So she is not lucky with respect to claim 8! This same treatment can be applied to the demolition worker case.

What should we think about this proliferation of evaluations of luckiness for a single case? I think that it is actually a virtue of my account that it renders these different judgments. As the case under consideration gets a more detailed description, our judgment of the case will tend to be better (that is, we should prefer the judgment of claim 8 over that of claim 7 in

consideration of adopting and justifying luck attitudes toward Smarty). As different features of the case are made salient, our judgments of the case should change; this seems to be exactly what happens in everyday disagreements about luck.

Conclusion: The Moral

1. The Moral

The general theory of luck that I have offered should be instructive in framing some more targeted philosophical discussions surrounding luck. The framework I offer will not be very revisionary for these discussions; instead, I think what is offered is a cleaner way of describing the intuitive tensions that make these issues philosophically interesting. Here, I will briefly cover how my theory might help frame the two leading discussions of luck in philosophy, anti-luck epistemology and the paradox of moral luck.

I follow Pritchard in his characterization of the project of anti-luck epistemology. He writes:

> Anti-luck epistemology urges a three-stage approach to the theory of knowledge that takes the anti-luck platitude[214] as central to the project. First, one offers a theory of luck. Second, one delineates the specific sense in which knowledge is incompatible with luck. Finally, third, one puts these two component parts together and formulates an anti-luck condition on knowledge that captures the specific sense in which knowledge is incompatible with luck. If the anti-luck platitude does reveal something deep and important about knowledge, then by undertaking the anti-luck epistemological project one should determine a core epistemic condition on knowledge.[215]

If we follow this method, then, following my theory of luck, we will want to identify the specific kind of luck that is intuitively incompatible with knowledge. Presumably, this is the possibility of someone being lucky *that her belief is true*. For example, if I overhear my roommate planning a surprise party for me, it is not problematic that I am lucky to get the evidence supporting my belief that a party will be thrown for me; it is not intuitively problematic that I am lucky to know about the party. However, if I form that same belief based on a guess, then this does not seem to be genuine knowledge even if it turns out to be true. So, the relevant

[214] Roughly, this is the intuitive idea that luck is, in some sense, incompatible with knowledge.

[215] Pritchard, Duncan. "The Modal Account of Luck." *The Philosophy of Luck.* Ed. Duncan Pritchard and Lee John Wittington. Wiley Blackwell, 2015, p. 143, emphasis removed.

proposition (given by my theory of luck) that we should be concerned with is, "S is lucky that her belief is true."

The final step, combining the general theory of luck and the articulation of the incompatibility of luck and knowledge to get a condition on knowledge, can then be done as follows. We start by considering what kind of advantage a person gains by her belief being true. If "S is lucky that her belief is true" then her belief being true involves an advantage for S, and S's having that advantage is extraordinary. The condition on knowledge will emerge directly from the conditions for ordinarily possessing the advantage involved in having a true belief.

The difficulty will arise when we try to articulate how it is good for a person that her beliefs are true. Trivially, we can see that it whether or not it is advantageous to simply have a certain belief will be contingent on various pragmatic concerns and consequences. However, we do not want to focus on the (potential) advantage of *having a particular belief* (or kind of belief), but on the (potential) advantage of *one's belief being true*. In other words, we should be concerned with identifying and understanding a principle on which it is always better for a subject to have true beliefs (rather than false ones) independent of the practical consequences of having any particular belief. This may be reminiscent of similar concerns brought up by discussions of pragmatic encroachment.[216] If we endorse the view that conditions on knowledge should not be sensitive to pragmatic concerns, then my theory of luck would instruct us to develop our anti-luck epistemology based on a non-pragmatic advantage involved in having a true belief. On my theory, the conditions for ordinariness for an advantage will be sensitive to the kind and type of the advantage; if the advantage identified were a practical one, then the condition on knowledge that would emerge from these conditions for ordinariness would

[216] See, for example Fantl, Jeremy and Matthew McGrath. "On Pragmatic Encroachment in Epistemology." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 75.3 (2007):558-589 and Ballantyne, Nathan. "Anti-luck Epistemology, Pragmatic Encroachment, and True Belief." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 41.4 (2011): 485-504.

necessarily be sensitive to pragmatic concerns. If it turns out that the only advantages associated with having true beliefs are practical ones, then we would be led to give up either the idea that conditions on knowledge should not be sensitive to pragmatic concerns or the project of anti-luck epistemology.

Articulating the relevant principle (that is, clearly describing what it is that is advantageous about one's beliefs being true) is what my theory invites the anti-luck epistemologist to focus on. Carefully specifying the advantage involved in having a true belief should enable us to identify the conditions that would justify having such an advantage. Under what conditions is it ordinary to have the advantage attached to one's belief being true? The conditions for ordinariness would emerge as conditions on knowledge, as their satisfaction would rule out the kind of luck that is incompatible with knowledge. I leave the development of such an anti-luck epistemology for another work.

The paradox of moral luck arises from a simple intuition about morality and an observation about our typical practices of moral assessment. The rough intuition (often attributed to a Kantian understanding of morality) is that, in some sense, luck should not make a moral difference. The observation, first articulated by Bernard Williams[217] and Thomas Nagel,[218] is that much (or even all) of what we normally take to be morally relevant is subject to luck. In terms of moral responsibility, we have a tension between the idea that we are not morally responsible for anything that is due to luck and the observation that we usually only hold people responsible for things that are subject to luck. In terms of moral assessment, the tension is between the idea that we ought not be assessed for things that are due to luck and the

[217] Williams, Bernard. "Moral Luck." *Moral Luck.* Cambridge University Press, 1981. 20-39.

[218] Nagel, Thomas. "Moral Luck." *Moral Luck.* Ed. Daniel Statman. State University of New York Press, 1993. 57-72.

observation that our normal practice of moral assessment bases all of our assessment on things that are due to luck.

I believe that the apparent problem of moral luck stems from a common error and that my theory offers a ready analysis of the problem. The intuition that luck should not make a moral difference seems to be motivated, roughly, by the idea that those actions, events, and consequences that seem due to luck do not accurately reflect a person's inner character or moral worth. In some way, luck interferes with my will properly expressing itself in the world, and moral responsibility and moral assessment should be attached to this inner character. The observation that all of the normal bases for moral responsibility and moral assessment are subject to luck is an observation of widespread matters of luck, not widespread genuine cases of luck. It seems to me that the precise difference between these mere matters of luck and cases of genuine luck, in the moral domain, is that the genuine cases of luck do not accurately reflect an inner moral character, while some of the mere matters of luck do. If we think of luck only as matters of luck, then the motivation for the original intuition, that luck inhibits the accurate expression of an inner moral character, seems to disappear. In fact, it seems that our normal practice of moral assessment is already sensitive to this distinction, as many of the luck attitudes we adopt are modified moral attitudes in light of observed luck. So, on my account, perhaps there is no problem of moral luck after all.

But, what if we accepted an account of luck more like the one offered by Nagel, where luck is defined in terms of lack of control? If we must make this concession, I feel we have discovered that the problem of moral luck is not about luck at all. Further, the idea that we cannot or should not be morally assessed or held morally responsible for what is not in our control only strikes me as intuitive for an very narrow sense of control (that does not capture the

wide range of cases Nagel identifies), and I think that the worry that there is an uncomfortable distance between some proper, internal object of moral assessment and our normal practice of moral assessment is actually mitigated by the practices surrounding luck (as I understand it), not exaggerated by it. I expect that the right way to address the concern raised by Williams and Nagel will actually track similar concerns from discussions between compatiblists and incompatibilists. In those discussions, the potential truth of some form of determinism threatens a similar uncomfortable distance between some proper, internal source of moral responsibility and our practice of holding each other morally responsible. I suspect that whatever answer we give to the incompatibilist that allows us to understand moral responsibility in a determined world will direct us to the right account for how we understand being held responsible for things that are, in the sense picked out by Nagel, not in our control.

2. Limitations and Future Work

There are two ways in which my account of luck is intentionally incomplete. First, on a descriptive level, I have not endeavored to describe the entire domain or content of the luck attitudes. While I have proposed a rough description of some plausible conditions for ordinariness that, in my experience of contemporary American society at least, motivate luck attitudes, I do not mean to imply that this description is complete or exhaustive. Establishing the exact content of the luck attitudes and the complete set of conditions for ordinariness endorsed in any particular community (contemporary or otherwise) should be reserved for a more anthropologically-minded project, although I have doubts that a complete descriptive account of either is possible or desirable. The normative side of these questions is more philosophically interesting, and I have only avoided this discussion in the interest of presenting my theory of luck on as general a level as possible. Coupling my theory of luck with a robust ethical and

meta-ethical theory would produce an account of which luck attitudes that we ought to adopt and provide grounds for establishing which conditions for ordinariness we ought to endorse.

So, in addition to expanded treatments of anti-luck epistemology and moral luck (addressing specific anti-luck epistemologies and specific accounts of the moral luck problem, rather than generalized approximations of them), the natural next step to my project is to pair my general theory with a robust ethical and meta-ethical account to address the normative questions around luck attitudes and conditions for ordinariness. Finally, there are smaller projects that could follow from the theory I have presented. First, a more detailed account of the logic of the luck propositions I have identified as canonical could be produced.[219] Second, I could provide a taxonomy in the spirit of Nagel's distinctions[220] between resultant luck (luck in how our actions turn out), circumstantial luck (luck in the kind of circumstances we act in), constitutive luck (luck in the traits and disposition we have), and antecedent causal luck (luck in the way our actions are determined by causal factors).

[219] A small step towards this has already been taken on pp. 144-145.

[220] Nagel, p.60.

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